The HEART of a SOLDIER

LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT

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THE HEART OF A SOLDIER

BY

LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT

CHAPLAIN TO THE FORCES
GORDON HIGHLANDERS AND BLACK WATCH
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no 1

I DEDICATE THESE PAGES

TO ALL MY DEAR FRIENDS

IN THE GORDONS AND THE BLACK WATCH

WITH WHOM I SPENT MEMORABLE DAYS

When the Boys come Marching Home

There's a drum-tap waiting to awake the world
To a wide-flung welcome cry;
And a wind that will go where the clouds hang low,
To uplift and blow them by.
A fresh dawn breaks along the wave-wet shore,
And a glad light tips the foam:
And to heaven all lands raise hearts and hands
When the boys come marching home.

They went far away when Freedom called—
Brave lads! with hearts of song!
They've been through the Valley where the shadows lie,
In the grey years, grim and long.
They'll return as men to the love they left,
Not again through wars to roam,
For wrong shall be buried in its grave in hell
When the boys come marching home.

There are some that will look through blinding tears
As the ranks go swinging by;
And some that will welcome the face they love
With a laugh that kills a sigh.
Ah, hearts that wait by Sorrow's gate,—
Though their dust lies in the loam,
The souls of your dead are riding ahead
When the boys come marching home.

O brave, who bear for us wounds and pain
In vigils dark and cold,
God bring you back o'er the homeward track,
For our world is growing old.
There's never an hour that steals away
But our soul seeks heaven's high dome,
And our hearts grow sore for your face once more
When the boys come marching home!

FOREWORD

THIS is not necessarily a parson's book, though written by a Padre.

I leave others to write of battles and horrors. I wish to shew, from inner knowledge, the lives of the men, and what they really are like, out in the circumstances of war, away from home.

I think it is suitable that America should see what this war makes for men. It is a great time for us all. I remember a man in my own country who one day hung out on his flag pole the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes sewn together. Somebody said to him, "That is a stupid flag. It is too heavy. There is no wind that blows which will carry it." But the only wind that ever really could blow that flag straight out before the nations is the wind that is blowing now—the wind that would blow liberty out of the earth. And we believe these two flags shall never be unknit so long

as that wind threatens the freedom which is the birthright of every soul,—which no man gave us, and which no man shall ever take from us, till we lie dead at the feet of the great sacrifice for freedom's sake.

I have had close association with the men, first with my bagpipes for companion, through the Camps in 1914-15. I have told of that time in my *Land of War*. Thereafter I was three months in one of the saddest hospitals in France, up at the Advanced Base; then with the Gordon Highlanders at the Somme, the Ancre, and the trenches above Armentières; and latterly, with the Black Watch at Ypres and in the famous Salient. So I think I have had plentiful opportunities of learning what is in the soldier's heart; and he has taught me much of what is in my own.

I crossed first, to France on Christmas Eve, 1914, in the troopship *City of Benares,* with a crowd of London lads. And it was an unforgettable crossing.

Christmas Eve on the waters, far from home—and on the way to unknown trials—their hearts full of the thoughts of the dear women and children precious beyond expression of words—how wonderful it was! A

silver mist lay along the face of the deep, and the night was full of glamour and witchery. The soul was ready for mystery. And it received it. For, about midnight, just when we were thinking of the faces in the firelight, a strange thing swam into our ken. A great ship, like a ship that men saw of old in ballad times,—like a ship of stars, illumed with innumerable lamps, came sailing across our track. The men leapt to their feet and crowded to the side. "What ship is that?" they whispered. And as it came on out of the silver mystery of the dim night we saw its name spelt out in shining lights. It was the beloved *Asturias,* the hospital ship; and on its side, touched into pathetic beauty, was emblazoned the great Cross, red as with the blood of Christ's immortal love, the symbol of pity for the suffering and the sad. It was like Christ Himself, walking the waters, carrying in His bosom, home, the stricken and the wounded, out of the Land of War, whose shores ourselves were seeking. And when it had passed, and faded from our sight across the sea, we lay down to our rest, touched into peace as though by contact with a vision of the divine.

A Chaplain's life is not, as so many think,

a thing of services. It is rather a thing of service. He is not, if he be a true man, what has been suggested with a sneer—an anæmic imitation officer with a clerical collar on. He has to be the comrade of all, friend of the weary, helper of the weak, and light-bringer in the dark hour. He may be mess-president, leader and sharer of quip and crank at the officers' tables, and purveyor of amusements in the camp, but if his work stop there, it is not half begun. In the hour of peace and the hour of strife, in the day of ease and the day of labour, he must be, with officer and private, a man's man, because he is Christ's man. The Chaplain who cannot stoop because he remembers that he is captain or major or what not, is never of much use. He must remember the comradeship implied by the cross on his collar, which speaks of the Cross which he carries in his heart. Most have remembered that, and many have worn their wounds like roses as they have gone right home, with the boys, all the road, by the way of sacrifice.

The Chaplain need never fear that his position as an officer will be overlooked. Nor need he ever fear that his office will be forgotten. He will find himself, soon, the

keeper of the soldier's heart, the confidant of the most intimate secrets of the brave, the friend of all the faithful. He touches the soldiers' life all round, in hospital, in camp, on the march, and in the trenches. In their weariness he must never be weary. In the cold and in the mire he must keep their hearts warm by the fire that is burning in his own. And when the parapets are falling in, he has to show himself unafraid—a quiet witness to the courage of the faith he preaches. For the men are like children. They have intuitional tests, having been touched by great ideals of manliness and service. I hope the world may prove worthy of their sacrifice, lest that which ought to be so full of value for the future may be allowed to wither, in the day of the returning.

In the sorrow and cloud of war, when I remembered those who had gone before, I often found comfort in the thought of the ancient story of my Celtic people, who dreamed of *Tir nan og*—the land of youth. The brave boys who, in their fair young manhood, have passed through the door of pain for our sakes, have gone thither to abide in unchanging beauty. They shall

know no age and decay like us. But, where all the brave who have triumphed stand to-day, they shall await the unfolding of final things. And surely it is best.

Life, out at the front, is not all a thing of sighing. We have laughter as well as sorrow—laughter that does not slam the door on thought of higher things, and thought of tender things and holy which does not close the curtain on lightest laughter, without which our very souls should perish. And our good-bye is always

"Cheeri-oh!"

LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT.

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THE HEART OF A SOLDIER

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I

IN HOSPITAL TENTS

Out in the Land of War we sometimes feel very far from those we love; and then, as though we had walked somehow right through reality, our thoughts are lifted oversea, and the mirage of home floats like a dream before us. The magic stop is touched in many ways. Little do the brave lads speaking to us in camp or hospital know how often they have brought us underneath its spell.

In a tent where the wounded lay, I was beside the bed of a fine young Scottish soldier, stricken down in the prime of his manhood, yet full of hope. The thought of the faces far away was always with him upholdingly. In fact, the whole tent seemed vi-

brant with the expectation of the journey across the narrow strip of blue which sunders us from home. This Scottish youth had been talking, and it was all about what to-morrow held for him. His mother, and the girl that was to share life with him—these were foremost in his thought. His face shone as he whispered, "I'm going home soon." Everything would be all right then. What a welcome would be his, what stories would be told by the fireside in the summer evenings! But he made the greater journey that very night. We buried him two days later, where the crosses, with precious names upon them, are growing thick together. Surely that is a place most holy. There will be a rare parade there, on Judgment Day, of the finest youth and truest chivalry of Britain and of France. Soft be their sleep till that Revally!

We got the pipe-major of a famous Highland regiment to come over; and when the brave dust was lowered, while a little group of bronzed and kilted men stood round the grave, he played the old wail of the sorrow of our people, *Lochaber no more.* I heard it last when I stood in the rain beside my mother's grave; and there can be

nothing more deeply moving for the Highland heart. The sigh of the waves along Hebridean shores called to me there, among the graves in France.

The men who lie in this hospital are those who could not be carried farther meanwhile, and they have been dropped here, in passing, to hover between life and death until they make a move on one side or other of the Great Divide. So it is a place where uncertainty takes her seat beside the bed of the sufferer, watching with ever unshut eye the fluctuating levels of the tide of destiny. It is a place where the meaning of war gets branded deep upon you. The merest glimpse solemnizes. Of course, the young may forget, for the scars of youth heal easily. But the middle age of our generation will certainly carry to the grave the remembrance of this awful passion of a world.

Here, of course, you meet all kinds of men from everywhere. They were not forced to come, except by duty, in their country's need. They were willing in the day of sacrifice, and theirs is that glory deathless.

One has been burned severely. How he escaped at all is a miracle. But they are

all children of miracle. Death's pursuing hand seems just to have slipped off some, as he clutched at them. This man looks through eye-holes in his bandages. He is an Irishman, and the Irish do take heavy hurts with a patient optimism wonderful to see.

There is also a fine little Welshman, quite a lad, who has lost his leg. He has been suffering continually in the limb that is not there. To-day he was lying out in the sun, and he looked up cheerily at me. "Last night," said he, "for about half an hour, I had no pain. I tell you I lay still, and held my breath. It was so good, I scarcely could believe it. I thought my heart would never beat again, at the wonder of it."

The usual picture postcard of the family is always close at hand. One North of Ireland man, up out of bed for the first time, was very full-hearted about his "missis and the childer." Said he, with pride, "She's doin' extra well. She's as brave as the best of them, and good as the red gold—that's what she is!"

Another poor fellow, in terrible pain, asked me to search in a little cotton bag which was beside him for the photograph

of his wife and himself and the little baby. "It was took just when I joined," he whispered. "Baby's only two months old there."

One day those who were able were outside, and a gramophone was throatily grinding the melody out of familiar tunes, with a peculiarly mesmeric effect. Suddenly the record was changed to *Mary of Argyle*. The Scotsman by whose bed I was standing said, "Wheesht! D'ye hear yon? Man, is it no fine?" And the tears ran down his cheeks as he listened. It was a poor enough record. In ordinary times he would have shouted his condemnation of it. But he was now in a foreign land—a stricken, suffering man. And it made him think of some woman far away beside the River Forth, where he came from. And his heart asked no further question.

At the head of the bed of some of them you will see a blue paper. "You're looking grand to-day," said I to a young fellow. And he replied, "Is there anny wonder, sir, wid that scrap o' paper there?" For it was the order for home on the first available opportunity. "Sure, won't the ould mother be glad to see me?" he continued. "The sunshine here is beautiful, but sun-

shine in the ould country is worth the world."

"Good-bye, sir!" they sometimes cry. "I'll be away when you come round again." But perhaps next time a sad face looks up at you, for the day so eagerly anticipated has been again postponed.

It is always home, and what the dear ones there are like, and what they will be thinking yonder, that fills up the quiet hours towards restoration, as it strengthened the heart and arm of the brave in the hour of terrible conflict.

The endurance, patience, and courage of the men are beyond praise—as marvellous as their sufferings. I can never forget one who lay moaning a kind of chant of pain—to prevent himself screaming, as he said.

Last night we had a very beautiful experience. We were searching for a man on most important business, but as the wrong address had been given, that part of it ended in a wild-goose chase. Nevertheless we were brought into contact with a real bit of wonder. It was an exquisite night. The moon, big, warm, and round as a harvest moon at home, hung low near the dreaming world. The trees stood still and ghost-like, and the

river ran through a picture of breathless beauty. We had got away beyond houses, and were climbing up through a great far-stretching glade. The road before us was a trellis of shadow and moonlight. Suddenly we had to stand and listen. It was the nightingale. How indescribably glorious! The note of inquiry, repeated and repeated, like a searching sadness; and then the liquid golden stream of other-world song. How wonderfully peaceful the night lay all around—the very moonlight seemed to soften in the listening. And yet again came the question with the sob in it; and then the cry of the heart running over.

The valley lay lapped in luminous haze, a lake somewhere shining. But there was no other sound, no motion, no sign of life anywhere—only ourselves standing in that shadowy glade, and that song of the beginnings of the world's sadness, yearning, and delight, somewhere in the thicket near.

It was difficult to believe that we were in a land of war—that not far from us lay ruined towns of ancient story—that the same moonlight, so flooded with delight for us, was falling on the uninterred, the suffering, and the dying, and the graves where

brave dust was buried. It was all very beautiful. And yet, somehow, it made me weary. For I could not help thinking of the boy we had laid down to rest, so far from home, and the piper playing *Lochaber no more* over his grave. And of the regiment we had seen that very day, marching in full equipment, with the pipers at the head of the column, so soon to be separated from the peat fires and the dear ones, more widely than by sundering seas. And we hated war. God recompense the cruel ones who loosened that bloody curse from among the old-time sorrows which were sleeping, to afflict again the world!

II

"BLIGHTY"

We had a great clearance out of hospital last week. The weather had been dull, with lashing rain; and in the tents it was just like being at sea, with the canvas flapping and straining, and the wind whistling about the cordage. But suddenly everything was changed. Birds sang in the hedgerows, and light and laughter were in the hearts of the boys in the wards.

"What's wrong to-day, Sister?" I asked. And she replied, "There's nothing wrong, Padre. Everything is just all right this morning. The boys are on the move for Blighty!"

That is the odd word, of Oriental origin, used out here for "Home." The British soldier, as he has moved from bivouac to bivouac, has emerged from his campaignings with a curiously miscellaneous vocabulary sticking to him, like the mud out of

the trenches, or the dust out of the deserts, in every land where he has been living and fighting. A vocabulary of soldiers' slang would be an interesting addition to our dictionaries. It will, in fact, have to be considered by lexicographers. A man who was fighting in Flanders over a year ago was gathering it up for me, when a bullet in his spine suspended his labour. I hope, for his own sake, as well as for the sake of philology, that it may be resumed soon.

The atmosphere of the wards was electric. And of course "Blighty" was the secret. And, when I remembered the boy from "Zoomerzet," and the man from the "Coomberland" hills, and the Welsh lads, as well as our own Scottish fellows, I could very easily interpret the dreams and hopes which were making their hearts beat faster. I could see the little white-washed cottages with the hedges green about them—the blue smoke lingering along the mossy ridges in the land they loved—the woman at the door watching for the advent of the postman, lagging always when love waits. I could hear the drowsy mill-wheel turning, in Sleepy Hollows far away, with the plash of cool water falling as it turned, and the bleat

of sheep, and the call of shepherds to their dogs, about the Kirkstone Pass and in the Highland glens. And I knew, too, that there were dingy streets and stairs in big towns and cities at home, which were transfigured, with a glamour born of longing, in the hearts that were turned seawards now by the thought of "Blighty."

Only a few faces were dowie. One man, with something like the gleam of tears behind his eyes, said, "My day is coming, too, of course; but I'd rather wait a little longer, till I'm strong enough to go." Yet you could feel the touch of argument in his speech. And his arm, outstretched in splints and the great hump in the bedclothes about his feet, told of limbs that would take some mending, and a long wait still, ere the happy day came round for his marching orders.

In one tent the "character," whom we may call Macfarlane, was sleeping very quietly. Sister said, "Tell him, just for fun, when he wakes, that he isn't going."

As I got along to his bedside he opened his eyes. "Hullo, sir," said he; "I'm for Blighty the day."

"Oh, Mac," I replied, "they've altered the

order. You'll have to dream of Glasgow a few times yet."

He looked at me incredulously for a moment, and then he asked, "Whit wey?"

"Well, you see," I explained, "the authorities don't think it would be safe to let a Macfarlane loose in Glasgow, unless there was a minister along with him."

But he shook his shaggy head, and cried, with a laugh, "Hoots, I dinna care what they think. I ken fine I'm gaun, for a' that. And, if ye don't believe't, look under my bed, and ye'll see my new breeks. I've looked at them often enough mysel' to ken they're there."

It was the same in all the wards. The new kit was laid out ready. The word was "Blighty," and it had gone the round. And in a little while they all were getting ready.

It was difficult sometimes to understand on what principles the garments had been served out. For instance, a lad with one leg was looking, with a queer grimace, at a pair of socks. "They 'ave been kind to me!" said he. "They must mean it for a change on the journey. Sure enough, I feel my toes twitching in the foot at the end of

the leg wot ain't there, but I'm blowed if I thought I'd see a stocking for it, too."

Another was sitting up in bed, clothed in the very tightest grey shirt I ever saw upon a man. He was glancing round with a very funny grin. "I dunno how I got into it," said he. "And Lor' only knows how I'll get out of it if they give me anything to eat on the voyage over."

Others who had already dressed were lying, tired out with the effort, waiting very quietly for the departure; while some were busy stowing away, in the little cotton bag which they carry with them, all their scanty treasures—the picture postcard, the pocket Testament, and odds and ends as souvenirs of their experience of the war.

The talk was all, of course, about the coming joys. "I think I see the kiddies already," said one. "Who cares for a finger or two, or a leg, at that, when we'll be seeing the old land soon?" And more than one would say, "Let me loose at the slackers when I get over yonder. My game leg itches to be at them, if the War Office would only give me the job."

It is an experience well worth having, just to see the train going off with the

broken boys for home. It is worth while working hard among them, to win the sunny smile of good-bye as you touch their hands and wish them God-speed in their journey.

This is, naturally, a land of surprises. You meet men gathered out of everywhere; and things and places you had long forgotten are revived by the contact. At the close of a service one man said, "Do ye mind yon nicht when you were at North Berwick speaking aboot Robbie Burns? I was there." I remembered it well, and the quiet walk to the station, and the voice of the sea, blown over the streets, in the dark. Another said, "I'm an elder at so-and-so. My minister kens you fine." On another occasion, just as I entered a hut to have a service, a young fellow walked up to me, held out his hand, and said, "Well, how's good old St. Stephen's getting along?" I thought I heard the solemn bell of the home church ring then. And once, when I was seeing off a troop train up the line, a sunburned soldier shouted, "I used to steal aipples oot o' your manse yaird at Turra langsyne. They were gweed aipples, but

they aye gi'ed me a sair wame!" And the train swept out of the station.

I was instantly reminded of another northern lad who told me that often, when lying wounded after Neuve Chapelle, he used to think of that same manse garden, and the "bonnie flooers aye shinin' there."

The soldier loves to tell you the names of his diseases. I have met many who suffered from "Gasteria"—a much more accurate name than science recognizes; while more than one is sorry for his wife at home who is distracted by the "insinuendos" of her neighbours. Many suffer also from a "historical tendency."

A few evenings since, I had just concluded a service, when about a dozen strapping Royal Scots, with broad bonnets, entered the hut. One could not mistake their nationality; and I felt as though I ought to know them. Sure enough, some of them were from Auld Reekie, and two were boys from my old parish of Alloa. And they were under the care of an Edinburgh City Councillor, who looked to the manner born, as fit for and as happy in a camp as in a council chamber. We had a hasty interchange of views, and then we

had to part. The quiet evening light fell softly on the faces of my countrymen, and for a little while home was not far away. The next moment it was good-bye—for how long? God knows. May He keep them safe till the returning!

What the home-touch means can only be fully understood out here. Just lately, in order that the men might know where to find us, I procured a cheap little St. Andrew's flag, and along the white cross I printed the legend—"Church of Scotland—Presbyterian chaplains." My old servant nailed it up, with pride, on the place where we live; and all afternoon thereafter I heard him softly whistling *Scots Wha Hae*. It is wonderful what the national symbol conveys; and especially to us Northerners. We should use it more frequently than we do.

It is extremely interesting to encounter the soldiers' opinions about the people amongst whom they have been moving. And it is very funny also to observe how the point of view affects these. One Scot said to me, "D'ye ken what an auld wife had the impudence to say to me? Says she, 'You Scotch is every bit as bad as the Ger-

mans.' Fancy that noo! But, of course, I was liftin' ane o' her hens at the time, and that wad maybe mak' a difference." I quite believe it did, both to the old woman and the hen.

Mascots are numerous, and as miscellaneous as they are plentiful. Any living thing that can be tamed becomes the favourite of regiment or camp. We ourselves have two, and, a few days since, we very nearly had three. One of them we thought to be a duckling. It was only a little bit of yellow fluff when we found it lying by the roadside, forlornly peeping, "Oui! oui!" We took the familiar word to imply consent, and adopted the creature. But it has grown by leaps and bounds, and now it is a very promising young goose. At first we called it "Tunnag," which is the Gaelic for a duck; and now it answers to that name so readily that we do not like to change it, lest we hurt the creature's feelings. And it does just as well, and is quite as correct as "England" for "Britain." Our other mascot is a kitten, which is a general favourite; and, indeed, if at night we miss him, we go to rest without anxiety, for we know he is not far off, nestled up somewhere in a

corner of a blanket beside one of Britain's heroes. And in the morning he reports himself at prayers, and faces the routine of the day as usual, beginning by climbing up your leg, with a very strong suggestion of "the devil among the tailors" from his needle-like claws. Our third, which only reached the border-line of probability, was a dog, of mixed breed, but clerical tastes. At any rate, he followed me almost to the family hearth, but the attractions of a French soldier, and perhaps a flickering spasm of patriotism, drew him from my heels ere it was too late.

Dogs of all kinds—of every breed and of none—are intimate friends of the soldier. Where they come from nobody ever seems to know. Their history has no past. They enter on the scene full-grown. We asked a Scotsman where he had got a very fine little puppy. "Oo, ye ken," said he, "it juist cam' in aboot." But it is a remarkable fact that what comes "in aboot" seldom, if ever, goes "oot aboot" again.

Seeing off a regiment of Scottish soldiers recently, we saw how tenderly the mascot was considered. When everything was ready, the last thing that was attended to

ere boarding the train was the feeding of the little kid which was the pet of the corps. A stalwart corporal called it to him, gave it its milk out of a baby's bottle, and then lifted it gently in among its martial comrades for the front.

Another very interesting regimental mascot is a full-grown goose, which was picked up on the retreat from Mons. The affection of the regiment has protected her through two Christmas seasons. The Englishmen called her "Lizzie," but the Scotsmen, with that historical instinct peculiar to the race, suitably dubbed her "Mons Meg." She is a thorough adept in the art of hissing at the Huns!

In a ward of our hospital there is a German prisoner, in bed, amongst our own wounded. He was leaning yesterday on his arm, looking curiously around him, and I observed two pieces of chocolate laid beside him. Just a few days since a band of captured Huns, with some Zeppelin air-devils among them, passed through, and some of our men actually bought cigarettes and chocolates for them—a very different mode of treatment from that accorded to our own poor heroes in Germany, spat upon,

and used like vermin while they lay helpless, suffering, and sick. We are a forgetful if not entirely a forgiving people. No wonder the enemy does not understand us when we say we mean to win this war!

BLIGHTY

There is sunshine in the shadow
Of the crowded wards to-day,
And pain seems clean forgotten,
Sorrow sped upon its way;
And you wonder what's the matter,
Till you hear the Sister say—
"O they're going off to Blighty in the morning."

There's a new kit underneath my bed,
I often take a peep
Just to see it hasn't vanished
With the fairies, in my sleep.
Why, I never care a button,
If I'm only fit to creep,
For I'm going off to Blighty in the morning.

Even crutches don't much matter
When you smell the breath of home,
When you hear the sailors shouting,
Who will guide you o'er the foam;
And you'll fight your battles over,
Ne'er again abroad to roam,
For you're going off to Blighty in the morning.

You are sorry you are leaving
Some poor lads behind you here;
And your heart, for all its gladness,
Can't restrain a pitying tear;
But you buck them up by telling
Their own hour of joy is near,
When they're going off to Blighty in the morning.

How the kiddies will come leaping,
And the Missis will be glad,
Though, to see you weak and limping,
She'll be just a little sad;
But she's proud that you have done your bit,
And now it isn't bad
Just to get you back in Blighty in the morning.

In Hospital, France. L. McL. W.

III

THE SPIRIT OF PAIN

SINCE last I wrote I have left the hospital behind, but I can never say good-bye to some of the memories of the brave lads there. It is in such a place, at such a time that one learns much of the material from which our Empire has been builded. The sacrifices of the past as we have learned them in the page of history are understood more clearly in the light of the present. And it is truly a great thing to see that the day of willing devotion to the noblest ideals is not yet gone from the life of our people. Suffering and death are faced without repining, and men say farewell to the promise of their youth ungrudgingly, feeling that the investment for the sake of the future of the world is worth the cost which they are paying.

Novelists have written, and imaginative folk have often wondered how brave men die. It is a topic of perennial interest. My

experience is that the bravest hearts who are readiest for sacrifice are not by any means tired of the world and the burden of life. This is a wonderful mystery. For these are just as precious to such souls as they are to the most shrinking, who would scream at the mere thought of pain or the loss of anything that makes existence sweet. To the greatest, life and death are very simple alternatives, lying easily to either hand, accepted without complaining.

One day I was going through a tent of suffering men just after a big "stunt." It was a day of much and great agony for those who were in actual bodily pain and for those of us who had to try to help them to endure it. I saw two men carried in and laid on beds side by side with each other. One was obviously very severely wounded. The other was swathed in bandages over his head and down over his face, apparently blinded. For a moment I hesitated, thinking it might be better to come back when, perhaps, the agonies of the one might be somewhat abated. But I put my hesitation aside. I found that the two lads were brothers who, fighting in the same trench, had been struck down by the same shell.

Late that evening an ambulance came for me as a man was dying, and I found it was the soldier I had spoken to earlier in the day.

The camp lay beautifully still. The clouds were heavy and the stars were veiled. I stepped into the tent, into the breathing dark. The beds were swathed in shadow, only one red lamp hanging from a central post.

They had brought the brothers quite closely together, and the one with the bandaged eyes had a hand of the other in his own. The dying man took mine in a grip of ice. "Padre," he whispered, "I am going home. And I wanted you to come again to me. Write tenderly to my people. Write as cheerfully as possible. This will break their hearts. And pray that my brother may be spared." There is no ritual for a moment like that. One could but ask Him who was broken also for others to be near this broken man whose body was pierced unto dying, for the sake of those he loved. We whispered together there, a few lines of *Jesus, Lover of my soul,* and a verse of the immortally wonderful *Lead, kindly Light.* And then he put his arm about my

neck, and drew me closer. "I tried to do what was right," said he. "O Christ, receive my soul. Have mercy upon me." I heard a man near me, in the dark, say "Amen." And I knew the fellows were not sleeping. They were lying there, in their own pain, thinking of him who was passing, that night, into the Great Beyond. Then I said, very quietly, the last verse of the hymn he had whispered:

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

The silence lay between us for a little, till the dying man asked, "What o'clock is it?" And I told him. "I'm so sorry for disturbing you so late," said he. "Good-bye, Padre, till we meet again." And with a sigh he passed away.

I heard a soft step near me, and I looked around, with the dead man in my arms. I should not have been astonished if I had seen the very Christ, with His wounds shining there, behind me, in that quiet tent, now so terribly, infinitely still.

It was only the woman with the red cross on her breast, the angel of the sick and weary in their pain, seeming always to us, in such a moment, the nearest we can get to Christ, for tenderness and help. And so I laid the dead man down upon his pillow; and had to turn immediately to the living one to comfort him.

As long as I live I shall lift my hat to the red cross. It is, of course, the symbol of the highest sacrifice earth's history ever knew; and it is still the mark of the tenderest devotion and most perfect self-surrender for the sake of others. Every man in khaki, and every man that has been a soldier, and every soul that has a soldier boy to love, should salute that symbol which speaks of love amid the hate and turmoil of war. For it means womanhood consecrated to gentle service, reckoning neither wage nor worry in aught it does; and it lifts the sting from broken manhood that has ventured for the sake of honour and of duty, through comradeship in suffering, to the verge of life, and beyond it.

War takes a man in the splendid vigour of his full manhood, and flings him out of

trench and battlefield a bleeding thing. The devoted women of the hospital tents shrink from no duty when the suffering and mire-stained man is brought to them. There can be no greater self-mastery and no more sublime self-forgetfulness than the washing of the bodies of the stricken, and the dressing of the terrible wounds that have broken their murderous way into the fair flesh of the soul's house. And how they work! It has to be seen to be understood, and once seen it can never be forgotten. Faithfulness, tenderness, and loving devotion are the marks of those ministering angels, "when pain and anguish wring the brow." There is no question of adherence to hours. It becomes a question of adherence to duty when a rush is on. There is no strike for shorter hours, or an increased wage, or a war bonus with them or the brave men whom they serve. The men, even to the roughest "grouser," appreciate it fully. "Oh, sister! go to rest now," I have heard them say, pleadingly, to the tired woman with the red cross on her breast and the white cross in her heart.

So also with the lads who drive the ambulance cars. I have felt my heart fill

as I watched them bringing in the wounded. Gently as a mother carrying a sick child in her bosom, they creep with their agonized burdens over the rough roads, calculating every inequality, thinking through every stage of the journey. I remember, at midnight, standing by one that had just been brought in. The first to be lifted out on a stretcher was a fine fellow, an Irishman, with his right arm blown off. The doctor, with his lantern, leaned over and asked his name. But the suffering man looked up in his face and said, "Sir, before we do anything, please thank that driver. He's a Christian and a gentleman."

The common sorrow of the Allied nations binds them very tenderly together. I used to see a fine expression of this in the town where I was first stationed, where some women who had a garden, on the way to the cemetery, were wont to do a very beautiful thing. As, almost daily, the heavy lumbering waggons with the dead came rolling along, those kindly hearts came out and laid on each coffin, above the Union Jack, a bouquet of exquisite flowers. Then the waggons rumbled on towards the graves. It was a sweet tribute to the brave

strangers who are fighting in France, so many of them giving their all in sacrifice for liberty, love, and home in this hideous uprising of all that was monstrous in the dark ages that are past.

One perhaps learns most by unlearning. I used to think of the spirit of pain as intensely, even immensely, vocal. I remember, especially, when I was young, a great gully in the north, beside the sea, up which the waves came dashing in perpetually recurrent warfare, the flood seeking ever higher, only to be drawn away down the sloping shingle again, shrieking, to the main. Often in the daytime I would listen, and, in the dark, would linger near, held by the awe of the unsleeping tragedy of that vast elemental grief which sways about the edges of the world. I told my heart, "This is the spirit of the world's pain, finding voice." But now I know otherwise. I have learned better, in the school of suffering, in the Land of War. The spirit of pain is silent—tholing, at its deepest. It looks at you out of those suffering eyes. There is no cry in it. For the mystery of duty is within its depths. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is its truest

picture. So it comes to be that the nobility and manliness of the brave combine to transfigure, with unforgettable splendour of ineffable beauty, the darkness of our times. When they do speak, there is a majesty of stillness about their utterance, vast as the mid-deep, far away, out under the stars.

The lads are uplifted by the nearness of the Unseen. I have before me two genuine documents, letters of two fine boys who went Godwards up the highway of the sun —the way of sacrifice. They speak for themselves. No novelist's imagination could create so fine an utterance. One was scribbled in the trenches, the other in the hospital ward, to those who had the best claim on the best which the writers had to give. Said one—

"I am in the trenches, and in half an hour we go over the top. Our artillery is going at it hammer and tongs, the biggest bombardment in English history. It is just like huge express trains rushing through the air in hundreds. All of us are happy in the prospect of a clean fight, after so many weary months as passive spectators of anything but warfare, except

on rare occasions. If I get through all right I shall add a postscript to this. If not, mother dear, I know you will not be beaten by a Spartan mother who had no heavenly Father revealed to her to look to for comfort, but yet could say, 'Come back with victory, or not at all.' With heaps of love. . . ."

The other is suffused with the same straightforward spirit of fearlessness and faith.

"I was glad to see your answer this morning, but am sorry I have not enough strength to write much. A good few died of wounds in this hospital through weakness, but I am leaving all doubts with God, as He holds the key of all the Unknown, and I am glad. So if I die before long, and I cannot see anything more sure, I hope to meet you all in God's good time. My wound is numb. It is in my thigh, and I have no pain. . . . I am now at the balance, to live or die. So good day, and God bless all. . . ."

There was nothing really extraordinary about these boys amongst their fellows. But one is struck by the frequency with which the men, after a deep emotion,

touch literature in their letters. Of course the secret of true style lies in a real experience. Some of them, it is true, tell absolutely false tales, and their letters are sentimental poses. But of the letters of dying men there can be no mistake, and those boys wrote these on the threshold of the eternal mystery. They are types of a large proportion of the army of to-day, fighting, suffering, and dying as those who have looked in the face of the Invisible, and are inheriting the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is surely an incentive to the people at home, for honour and remembrance.

IV

UP THE LINE

I AM now attached to one of our most famous Highland regiments, of which our nation has frequently had reason to be very proud. Its composition is soundly national. Its muster-book might worthily be bound in tartan; and its casualty lists read like the Communion-roll of a northern parish. Not long since the usual cynic asked me, with a pitying smile, "How many Scotsmen are there in the regiment?" And I said, "I could answer you more simply if you put your question the other way." "Tut, tut!" he replied, "it's full of Englishmen. At any rate, I know, straight off, three Londoners and two Liverpool men in it." But I reminded him that it takes more than five to make a whole battalion, and that he might certainly find a larger proportion of Scotsmen in a London regiment than Londoners in a Scottish one. Such generalities are, of course, hasty and worthless at their best.

And, besides, we are a wide-hearted people, and are kind to any brave spirit which prefers to fight under the shelter of a famous name and a historic tartan. So let it rest at that.

I joined up with the battalion when it was resting in a beautiful village, with a rushing river running seaward, between old houses whose gardens crept down close to the stream. The grey ruins of an ancient château peeped over a wooded cliff above the square. And at night, when all was still, the boom of far-off cannon reminded us, as we woke from sleep, that we were in the Land of War, and that up yonder, through the darkness, lay the Valley of Pain awaiting for our coming.

And then our own call came to move up higher. I marched with a group of about two hundred men, leaving the village at two o'clock one misty morning. There was a strange element of weirdness in the preparations for departure. The village was in black darkness, except for the places where our folks were getting ready to go. Here and there was busy packing of transport, and the gloomy square re-echoed the passing of feet. Somewhere, round a corner, Scot-

tish voices were singing *Auld Langsyne*—a parting song full of poignancy in the time of war. The people in some of the billets got out of bed, and brought forth choice wines for a parting cup, with best wishes for "bonne chance." We fell in quietly; and then out rang the sharp command, and off we set. As we marched, the wooded banks on either side sent back the sound of our marching, till we could well believe that ghostly bands were marching with us. One missed some kind of music. And I had not my bagpipes at hand. At first there was a snatch of song, or the whistling of a bit of melody. And then silence, as the heavy packs began to tell on the men's shoulders. The day was breaking when we reached a station; and we lay down on the ground, to wait. We need patience at such a juncture, for the authorities never hurry. A fife and drum band, far off, began to send its music forward through the dawn, and a dusty battalion filed into the station. And then up came the horseboxes, and off we puffed, a stage nearer the guns.

How hot the few miles were after we left the train. And how glad we were to get to our billets in a little village crowded to

overflowing with troops. Our own billet was in a farmhouse, with the usual manure heap in the courtyard at the door, and millions of flies, which gave us a most inconvenient welcome. But we rejoiced at last to be able to lie down on a floor, with a haversack under our heads and an overcoat across our feet, losing ourselves in a sleep such as money could never buy nor feather beds could woo.

There was a beautiful garden behind the house, and the ground rolled away in gentle slope toward the horizon. In the evenings, after dinner, we used to go out among the apple trees, and watch the skies away southwards, lit by the constant flashing of the guns; but the sound was not carried to us, as the hills shut it off from our hearing until night sank, deep and quiet, when the voice of a mighty power, inscrutable, seemed calling us all to come and take our share.

I was moved up to a tented hospital on the hillside, and for a few days and nights the steady stream of muddy, bloodstained, and maimed men had been pouring through the wards, while an incessant crescendo of cannonading shook the earth and air. To

the right we could distinguish the rapid, angry, and efficient blatter of the French artillery. But one day, in the midst of it, while we sat at mess, suddenly a new voice entered into the din with a very masterful insistence. And, as we listened for a moment, the gloomy clouds were torn with the vivid lightning blaze, and all the thunders of heaven seemed loosed above the carnival of war. It was a magnificent and most solemnizing interlude, as though the very Titans had chosen at last to enter into earth's agony. "Ah," said one, "that's the real thing. How it makes pygmies of us all." And then the floodgates seemed opened, the sluices of the skies flung free, and the rain in solid sheets swept over the world. And that night the wounded and the dying came in, mud-caked to the eyes, but their hearts, however feebly beating, all athrob with unconquerable faith in the cause. "Go down," said one to me—"go down to the walking-case station. I'm told it's worth seeing." And it was. About a hundred yards along the road stood a little shed, where two tired men were writing down hasty particulars as a steady line of battered warriors of all ages kept

passing into tents beyond in the dark. Along the roadside stood a queue of over three hundred men, like a line at a picture-house door on some holiday at home—some with a trouser leg cut away and a bloody bandage in its place, some with their heads bound up, some with steel helmet, and perhaps half a blanket round their shoulders, all scarred by the hungry claws of death that had just missed them. They flung grotesque shadows against the light of the dim lanterns; but yet they were not cast down, for they knew they had made a good fight of it, and had left behind them in their places as brave hearts still to carry on the game.

We went up the line on a Sunday night. It had been a very beautiful morning, but heavy clouds began to gather. We had been expecting the summons, and our hearts were ready for it. I had my Church Parade in a stubble field. Away to my left an observation balloon was being fired at with shrapnel that burst in little fluffy puffs which had a flash in the midst of them. It took something to keep men's attention with such a rival attraction overhead. In fact, it took a good deal to

hold my own. Every minute I longed to look around and see what was happening. Our friends declared that the Gordon squint was quite discernible for quite a while, as the men had been listening with one eye and watching the balloon with the other! In the afternoon I had a Communion service at the Y.M.C.A., in the little courtyard of a small farm, and my paragraphs were punctuated by the cry of the guns. The twenty-third Psalm and the second Paraphrase take on a meaning then deep as eternity. And some who were present were very soon to put to the proof the promise of the words they sang, for that night they were speeding right up to the line of battle.

It was just at this time that I got my first taste of shell-fire. It is an interesting experience, though there are pleasanter ones, if a person may choose. But it is not nearly so hateful as being under the threat of a Zeppelin raid, as I recall it in the hush of midnight.

I was going up with a friend and sixty men, who were carrying rations and supplies to the trenches. It was a memorable day for many to whom I had grown intimately close as their Chaplain.

I could not help wondering what the folks at home would think if they were to see our own fields ravaged and riven under the heavy hand of war, like those through which we rode—our sweetest villages and towns battered into dust heaps, our woodlands shattered by shell into derelict stumps, and dead men in the valleys, beyond the appeal of earth's conflict for ever. We rode along more than one torn-up route which had only recently been streets where children had played and where old men had smoked and talked, and in between lines of crumbling wreckage that had been happy homes; while the guns around and ahead seemed shouting of the ruin they had made, and of the devastation yet to come ere victory and peace should kiss together, and the horrid wreckage of a continent be restored.

At a sheltered corner we left our horses, and pressed on to a sunken road, with a wood along one side of it. And there we fell in, on a bank, to receive final instructions. And we began to see what kind of thing was going on quite at hand. For first came a line of German prisoners carrying down our wounded in stretchers.

The kilted fellows sat up when they saw us, and waved their hands, some shouting greetings as they came. "We've taken the place," said one. "But will we hold it?" I asked. And a look, unforgettable, swept across the eager face, ere it fell back again upon the pillow. "Of course," was the reply. "It's no likely we'll gi'e up what we've paid for."

But, as we waited, suddenly out from over the wood came a screaming thing which swept above our heads with a shriek, and fell just behind us. It was no disgrace that brave fellows ducked as it passed, though, fortunately, it threw its horrible message away from us when it struck the earth and exploded. But it was followed by more of its kind ere we moved onwards. And when we passed along we saw more instances of the price that was being paid. For across the road came wounded men, some limping in solitary pain, others helped by slightly less stricken comrades, some falling down to rest a while ere struggling onwards once again, and some in stretchers carried by tired-looking bearers. We crossed some open ground, and reached a long, narrow

communication trench, packed with men, with no room for us to get along it. It was very striking to see the line of faces suddenly look up to note who were passing by. Then some one shouted, "Look out!" And in that instant a wild messenger of war's passion came hurtling over and burst with a roar ahead of us. We made our shoulders as narrow as possible, and instinctively turned our steel helmets to meet the spatterment of earth and iron; and then pressed on again. The shell-torn ground sloped darkly up towards a gloomy horizon line, on which we saw the black smoke and earth-rubbish of bursting shells; and again and again we had to stop and stoop before the missiles of the German Hymn of Hate, until it grew so "hot" that we were ordered to get into the trench. I got pushed from my place through the haste of some of our fellows; and then, with a rush and a roar, a shell blew in the side of the trench, and the man who, for just a few seconds, had been where I should have stood, was struck down, and lay bleeding where he fell. My friend was lifted up and whirled right round by the concussion. A German, buried in

the parapet, was torn out of his grave, and his leg just missed my friend's head. "I thought it was yours, Padre," said he. "But I fancy you'd have said something in passing if it had been so."

And then, the next moment, there was no thought of laughter; our hearts very suddenly were charged with something like tears. In the Land of War reactions follow one another quickly. Life and Death gall each other's heels.

It was a narrow shave for us all; and if we had been still out in the open many of us must certainly have been in the casualty list. We pushed on to the Headquarters Dugout, which the enemy had apparently located, for he was giving it most uncomfortable attentions. It was a sweltering little hole in the earth, and the 'phone was being busily employed, for we had again lost a gallant commanding officer, most of our officers were dead or wounded, and a big chasm had been made in the ranks of the regiment.

Going back over the open ground was more unpleasant than coming up had been. The air was filled with the shriek and hum of missiles; and one felt the need of an

eye on one's shoulder, and had to be ready for a leap into the nearest shell-hole for cover.

We passed one fellow standing by the way, holding up his kilt, and he shouted, "My bandage has slippit." So we got it readjusted, and he was able to walk. But at midnight, in the ambulance tent, I saw him on the operating table for another wound which he had received in his later progress, from a nasty bit of shrapnel. Farther down we came on a stretcher with a wounded man in it, the stretcher-bearers lying beside it exhausted. We offered our help, but they would not have it. "We'll be all right in a minute or two," they said. Ahead of them was a gaunt Irishman, apparently blinded, and in a state of great exhaustion. A little comrade, with his arm around him, was helping him along. They had lain out for over a day in No Man's Land. I took one side of the poor chap, and helped him also. "Is it far?" he kept asking. And I always told him it was only a few yards more. "But I am blind," he said. And I assured him he would probably soon be all right—a lot of fellows had that experience. What else

could one say? "Now, Tim," said his chum, "you wouldn't believe me when I told you that; but you're duty bound to believe an officer." But the man, with perceptibly increasing weakness, only kept asking, "O God—is it far?"

I learned how easily a story grows, and how many a tale that is not true has frequently a groundwork of fact. For in going up the trench, it got blocked just before the shell came over. And I had to take from a man in front of me his rifle which had got entangled in another man's equipment. I carried it forward with me. And when I got home I found the story before me, that I had led a detachment of the Gordons to victory!

And, again, in a pictorial paper, was my portrait, with the legend that while I was stooping over a wounded man, a "Hun, lingering in the vicinity," had thrown a bomb which had narrowly missed me.

While still a third phase of the episode took the form of a story told to a friend of mine by the man whose rifle I had taken, to the effect that I had just done so when a shell blew in the trench, and neither I nor the rifle had been seen again!

One could easily trace these to the impressions conveyed through soldiers' letters from the line. But it shews how history is very frequently made.

Another thing I learned—namely, how kindly towards the Padre beats the Scottish soldier's heart. For the first thing I heard after the shell burst was the cry, "Where's the minister?"

Men do learn in such circumstances to think of others. For war is the most remarkable of anomalies. It is a cruel, cursed bit of dirty work. The romance of it is for the most part written by comfortable firesides. It is a thing of bitterest pain, of rending grief, and inconsolable bereavements. But yet it does evolve such nobleness of enterprise, such splendour of shining self-forgetfulness, such consecrated dedication to ideals high and far above this little dusty star which is our world, as evoke undying wonderment in all ages. So it may perhaps have in it an element of rebuke, blessing, and help for the sordidness and the goodness which together make up the strangely fine story of human life day by day.

V

TREK AND TRENCH

Time flies in France. We get immersed in the work of the moment. We cannot escape from its enfolding power, and every day gets full of the demand on our sympathy and interest. The march, the trench, the billet, and all the countless things that fill each passing hour, leave little room for ennui. You may feel tired enough sometimes, but something fresh is round every corner, and each distinct experience is threaded on the one clear purpose of duty every day.

After my first taste of bombardment, when intimate death went closely past me, flinging down another who had that moment taken my place, we removed to another sphere of the war. That was a very serious time for us, and we left many a mother's son and dear comrade behind us when we marched away. Surely there can be nothing more pathetic than the remnant

of a Highland regiment swinging along its route, with the pipers at the head of it, playing merry tunes to hearts that have no mirth in them, for remembrance of the brave left sleeping.

It is amazing how we almost never mention the names of those who have fallen. It is an unwritten law of the regiment, fraught with pathos. To an outsider it might seem callous or indifferent; but it is the very opposite. It does not the less mean that their memory is written deeply on our inmost souls. Even in the Church Parade on the Sunday following, we do not directly refer to them, though our hearts are full of the thought of them all the time. Well do I remember our first service, after a bitter experience. The lines seemed so much thinner, and nearer the drums which made up my pulpit. It was in a beautiful field, in a hollow between sweetly wooded slopes. And just as we had finished our opening psalm, a wonderful perfume filled the air. It was the wild thyme, bruised, broken, and crushed by our trampling feet, sending out an odour like a benediction, from its wounding. And it gave a background of ineffable value to our thought of

those brave men slain, from whose sacrifice such blessing and wonder of peace should come to the sorrowing world in God's good time. I felt as though they were very near us. And we had a veiled mystery marching with us, as we followed the pipes and drums back to the village again.

The French people appreciated very fully what the Somme effort meant, and what it had achieved. I was up with the Field Ambulance one day, when I heard that our regiment had moved back to rest billets, and I had missed their going. But I got a motor-car to lift me in to the rail-head next morning, where I found a brigade going in the same direction, so I attached myself to them for that journey. That rail-head was Albert, a town very well known in the story of the war—a large and prosperous place before the big guns battered it to ruin, and sent the people fleeing from their homes for safety. Everybody knows about its fine church, with the mosaic-decorated porch, and the tower which was surmounted by a huge statue of the Madonna, holding the Holy Child in her arms. A shell had struck the tower, and overthrown the group. But the Madonna was caught and held by the

heel, so that now she leans out above the town, as though protecting it with her loving care. Underneath is constant traffic of motor lorry, ambulance, and marching men; and the Child, whose advent spoke of peace and good will long ago, looks down from His mother's arms, watchfully waiting till the mills of God grind the proud nations into bloody dust. There is a legend already that when that figure falls to earth the war will end. But there is another legend that, when it falls, France will fall with it into defeat. And they say that the wise old priest, believing in works as well as faith, and in the sound doctrine that we ourselves can answer half our prayers if we choose, got the blacksmith to go up the tower, and fix an iron clamp around the feet of the statue so full of national destiny, so as to give a practical turn to the people's prayers. I have not tested this part of the legend, but I hope that it is true. I should like to "sit under" such a man—whose prayers must have the saving grace of practice in them, and who is prepared to make his prayers a real bit of his life. It is the best example I know of Faith and Works. It is always good to pray that your cattle or your chil-

dren may not fall over the cliff into the sea; but it is wise also to put up a fence along the edge of peril at your earliest opportunity. I wish more people followed his example, and then fewer would be blaming God to-day for the evil and the sorrows which they could themselves have prevented.

That town is well worth seeing. In the square there is a notice board warning people not to linger, as there is danger. The houses are shaken to their foundations. Some day a glazier will make the beginning of a fortune among the broken windows. Bricklayers and plasterers should get a good thing in the way of trade in the rebuilding after the war. There was a huge factory of Singer's Company, but the floors are gone, the roof is smashed, and the place is a congested cavern of rusting sewing-machines. In the square is a group of gipsy caravans in various stages of shatterment. And almost daily the German wakes up and remembers that he ought to send something over to try to wipe it off the map. So you hear the hurtle and scream of the big Hun shells, with a "scrunch" as they fall, as though they were breaking the bones of a world; or the nasty

cough of a howitzer somewhere, like a grim old giant spitting out his teeth in a paroxysm of temper.

We got into the train of horseboxes there, and set off upon our journey. It was a lovely day. And I think that travelling in a horsebox on a fine day is as enjoyable as anything I know. It is far freer than in a closely-packed carriage. We sat in the open doors, with our legs out, and our feet on the foot-boards. And we saw the whole country, in a way that exceeded our expectations. We passed through towns and villages, hamlets and fields, gardens and orchards, flats and rolling territory. And now and again old folks came to the edge of the railway embankment, and, first pointing heavenwards, held up both hands in the attitude of blessing as we passed. They knew where we were coming from, and what we had been busy at, for their sakes. At last we reached our destination, though it was not mine; and the men got out, formed up along the roadway, and then marched off, till the sound of their bugles died away across the woodlands. I found a motor lorry, on a rambling errand; and, discovering that at the end of its journey it was to

reach the town where I heard my people were lying, I got a lift in it. It was a long journey, for we had tyre trouble, and engine trouble, and lost our way in the dark, finding sweet, quiet little villages of sleepy folk, who put us right again with yawning directions, till I climbed inside, and lay down on the jolting floor, in a delightful slumber. When I awoke, I was in a village square, in the dawn. And when I got out to see if I could find a breakfast anywhere, I found the village was the billet-home of our people.

How kind these villagers were, and how interested in the kilted men. Every evening, when the pipers came down the street, and played in front of headquarters, everybody crowded round to watch and listen. But we were not to be long there. Rest means a varied kind of thing Somewhere in France. In a morning of down-pouring rain we set off again for another journey, and after hours of soaking wait at a wayside station, we got into our train once more for we knew not where. We were drenched; we were tired; but we were not down-hearted. And song and story kept our crowded carriage happy and bright. Now it was *Annie Laurie;* and now the tale

of the bashful poor relation who attended every funeral, in the vain hope of a legacy, till somebody left him a hundred pounds, which so upset him that he dropped his hat into the grave, and all he could think of saying was "Beg pardon." And then, as the night wore on, the talk was of home, and the quiet places on the hillsides, and behind them. And somebody started to croon *O God of Bethel.* And so we passed into quiet, till sleep gave us dreams of dear faces far away from the Land of War.

When we were awakened, it was to step out on the border of Belgium. The rain was over and gone. A clear blue frosty sky was overhead, and the moon was high in the heavens. We fell in, and the pipers struck up a march; and out we moved along the rough causeway, past dark houses of sleep, in the cold early morning. On either side we saw the star shells rising and falling; and we wondered where we were to lie down till the day. We stepped off the road in France, into a very miry field in Belgium; and in a tent lay down in our blankets, and slept as soundly as though we were in the Hotel Cecil.

In a day or two we moved on again. It

was good to move, if only out of one miry place into another. Even change of mud is wholesome. We passed through a village which had been well shelled, especially at the cross-roads; and, of course, the church had caught its share, but the big square tower stood solid and unshaken. And then it was the trenches. They were comfortable and clean at that season, but they only needed a little rain to be provoked into wretchedness, when you might find the thing you were to walk upon, floating level with your haunch. What a change this was for us from the former sphere of operations, where night and day the throb and passion of artillery were heard, with the big guns breaking in like a huge drummer, somewhere, beating a mad revally. Here it was the opposite extreme of grim stillness, which seemed louder far than sound. And that stillness, broken only by the occasional "spit" of a sniper's bullet, meant that men were tensely watching one another across the desolate No Man's Land, and that a finger raised above the parapet on either side would bring the swift messenger of death into prompt activity. A ruined railway station occupied a corner of the trenches, and there

still stood the remains of the last train which had been loaded up by the enemy, but which could not be taken away by them. There were portions of our front line only thirty or forty yards from the German lines; and sometimes we had to flatten ourselves against the side of a trench, and bury our noses in the parapet, when the trench mortars and "whiz bangs" came across, shaking everything, and frequently blowing in the frail defences. More than once the foe crept forward in the dark, and lay hid in shell-holes, waiting; and in the misty grey dawn one of our young officers, whose inquisitiveness could not longer be patient, peeped over the edge of the sandbags, to escape death only by a hairbreadth. He accepted ever afterwards my advice to the boys: "Keep your head; and keep it down; and you will keep it on." And yet the impulse to take just one good look across is almost irresistible. In the beginning of the war it meant a long roll of honour, especially for the overseas troops. But time and experience are wonderful teachers, even for the brave.

VI

MEETINGS AND PARTINGS

When I saw Colonel McCrae riding at the head of his battalion, coming from the trenches, and got from some of the lads the welcome, "Good old Edinburgh!" I wondered what the folks at home would think if they could see their boys.

It is sometimes strange how one meets with friends in the Land of War. Indeed, it is wonderful to think how few we do meet, when we consider how many whom we know are everywhere about, while yet we may be shut out from contact with one another by the daily duties which keep us running in our own groove.

One day I met an elderly officer of my acquaintance coming along, obviously under some excitement, sorrow chasing gladness in his face. He said, "I heard that the New Zealanders were marching by, and my boy's battalion was amongst them. So I ran down the road and saw him; and we

marched a bit of the way together. I haven't looked on the lad's face for over six years now. God keep him safe, to see his mother again." And he turned away quickly up the hill.

Another time I was at the funeral of a poor brave lad from an English regiment. The grave was in a little corner, off the road; and a big gun, within a few yards, was yelping its angry message to the foe, as we laid down the sleeper, wrapped in his brown blanket, to his last long sleeping place. As I finished the service a young officer came forward, and I saw he was one of my own church boys, fine, clear-eyed, bold—the only son of a worthy fireside, fresh from college distinctions which spoke of the promise of the future. We spent the day together in my tent talking of all whom we knew and loved, and of a recent experience through which he had passed, when the wave of death had swept back, leaving him and a handful of men breathless on the verge of safety. We parted reluctantly from one another; and just a few days later he led again his faithful fellows into the dark valley. And now he is sleeping till the final trumpet call, where he fell

with his face forward. No wonder we are sometimes loath to part, when we meet and talk together, in the Land of the great Uncertainty. I was by that time far away in another sphere of activity, where sniper watched for sniper with a grimly tense vigilance, and the listening stillness seemed louder than the roaring guns we had left behind us. But I often think of the place where his dust is sleeping, near the ruined village and the splintered forest through which our men went shouting to victory, laughing in the face of death, on a summer morning.

Some meetings wake sudden memories of home. One day I met a young officer from my parish searching for me in the streets of a French town. His heart had the glamour of the West born with it. I remembered his mother dying. She had forgotten the ancient language of her people, for she had early sought the South. But after all the years of the city her heart turned back along the ways of remembrance, and she asked for a Gaelic psalm. And so a friend came with me, and we sang very softly by her bedside the psalm which the folks sing still, away where the

low waves croon by quiet shores, at Communion gatherings in the Hebrides. And she joined with us in spirit in a prayer in the fading tongue of her people, ere she went home, and we turned once more to the war. When I saw her boy there, I seemed to hear the cars going by again in the darkened streets; and home came very near my heart.

Among the first of the lads I met in my regiment was one who came up to tell me how I had baptized him nineteen years since, in my first parish in the North. He seemed to think that I should have remembered his face, though I had never seen him since that day. Yet while he spoke to me, I could not but see the cottage on the croft, on the hillside far away, where the corn was golden to the door, and the larks were singing in the blue sky overhead, and nobody had a thought of war in his heart, the day I went up to the baptism there.

I often wonder if I shall ever hear the song of the lark again without hearing also the cry of strong men in their agony. For often I have left the tent just for a moment's relief, and there, far above this sorrow of

ours, how wondrously sounded that splendid rapture of music.

There are constant opportunities for the artist amongst our men, if only the artist were there to catch the play of firelight on rugged faces, and the shapes and postures of comely manhood. One night we had a cinematograph show in a farm court-yard, which was packed with our fellows. The scene was unforgettable. Some heavy clouds hung overhead, but there were wide blue star-strewn spaces, where the sickle of the new moon hung dimly, like a thing of dream. The bare, gaunt skeleton rafters of the broken roofs of the barns and outhouses stood out black against the sky. And as the pictures flickered across the screen, the hushed attention of the men was most infectious. Sometimes it was a scene of some of the places only too familiar to them—a ruined village, a shell-torn road, or a group of officers at the door of a broken-down house, to be greeted with a deep silence, or the swift intake of breath which speaks of poignant remembrance, or a hearty cheer as this or that favourite personality appeared. Then there were ships, the sea-lions of Britannia; followed by

laughter-provoking reproductions of Bairnsfather's inimitable cartoons. The next time these men were crowded together under the strain of deep emotion, they were themselves passing through an episode of imperial and international picture-making and map-changing, up where the guns were drumming the prelude of another act in the tragedy of war. For it was just a few days later that the laughing crowd in that moonlit courtyard went up the line again.

It is always very touching to see how thoughtful of others the men are, even when they themselves are in painful circumstances. I remember one man, seriously wounded. And I asked, "Have you written to your mother?" He replied, "Not yet—you see it is not easy for me." So I offered to do it for him. But he said, "I'd rather do it myself. You see, if she noticed that any other person had written it she'd begin to think that I had lost my hand." I lent him my pencil, and watched beside him while he laboriously, with his bandaged hand, spelt out a loving letter, saying how glad he was to be so well, and how eagerly he was looking forward to go home to her—in fact, all the nice things he could

tell her in order to keep her mind free from worry about her boy.

The Chaplain's work is frequently of a very miscellaneous nature, if he is human, and not too conscious of his uniform. It is not a double life that he leads, but a life all round. For example, one day in a tent I found the orderlies so busy that some of the patients were trying to shave themselves, and they were not finding it an easy task. So, as I saw blood streaming down the cheek of one wounded fellow, I essayed to finish the job, which I did, without scars. The blood of a brave man is too precious at present to be lightly flung away. But I had to promise to perform the same useful operation for some of the others next day. One of them was wounded in the chest, and was helpless, but he was worrying very much about his bristling beard. My Gillette swept away his worry; and it was requisitioned for half a dozen like him. It must have been somewhat of a trial for the patients, for the growth, with most of them, was at least a week old, and some of it pretty thorny. But they were thankful to be clean again. When I had finished these, a little lanky chap, with a tiny fluff of down on his

chin, said, "Me, too, please, sir." But the others laughed aloud, and one, lying flat, with many wounds, panted out, "Come over here, mate, and I'll blow it off for you."

While I was shaving one poor lad, who could scarcely breathe, he gasped, with a smile, "This would make a fine thing for the papers, or the 'Movies.'" And a Scottish boy said, "I'll tell oor man when I get hame. I ne'er was shaved by a Parish Minister afore, and I dinna expect to be again."

It brought a touch of variety into their life. And, just as I finished, the surgeon came along. "Hello, Padre!" he cried, "what's this you're at?" And then, with a laugh, he said, "Oh, well—who knows? It's not far from a parson's job, for cleanliness is next to godliness, of course."

The spirit of the men is splendidly steadfast. I remember the first wounded man I carried on a stretcher. I understood then what a heavy bit of work, not too much thought of, the stretcher-bearers do. He had been shot in the shoulder, which was shattered, and the lung had been penetrated. But he was very plucky, and uncomplaining. He had lain a whole day in No Man's Land; and then, in the dark, he and his officer, also

wounded, had crawled for some hours, till they got into some water, from which they could not extricate themselves, and only with great difficulty could they keep their heads above it, till the rescue came. A little longer, and they must both have been drowned.

It is hardly possible to conceive what it means. One fine young blue-eyed stalwart told me how he had lain out for thirty-six hours. "I was just on the brink of giving in, and turning round to die, when I was picked up. All the time I was trying to get at my water-bottle, which was under me. And at last, just before I was saved, I got hold of it, only to find that it had been pierced by a bullet, and every drop of water lost. That moment, if you like, was worse than death, after all my struggle, so deep and bitter was the disappointment which it held for me."

Contentment is the first big thing that comes to a man, obliterating all things else. As one little Scotsman, or all that was left of him, said, "Thank ye, sir. I'm vera comfortable. Eh, my, it's fine to be in a bed, and get a drink o' sweet milk again."

Out here you get constant proof of the

fallacy of the old alien belief that the Scot has no humour. One day I came across three typical fellow-countrymen in their muddy kilts, sitting on a hummock together. I asked a dark Celtic-faced one of the three his name. And when he told me what it was, and where he came from on the mountain fringe, I said, "But you'll have the Gaelic?" "No a word," he answered. "I hadna the intelligence to pick it up, and had to be content wi' English." "Oh," I said, "you had just swallowed it down too hastily with your porridge." The next man had a fine old Highland name, but without the "Mac," which should have been before it. "What's become of your 'Mac'?" I asked. And the first said, with a laugh, "It wasna wi' porridge that he swallowed it doon, ony wey." The third had a very bad cold, which was troubling him exceedingly, so that sometimes he could hardly speak. "You're a Scotsman, too," I said. "Ye micht weel guess that, sir," was his reply, "an' me wi' sic a dry cough!"

When the Push began, how keen everybody was, feeling that what all the world had been waiting for had come at last. We used to listen for the voice of the storm that

was coming, and at length it came, when all along the wide horizon rang the horrid and yet magnificent clang of war. Earth had never heard anything like it. Such a chorus had never stirred the heart of man, until we caught it. The wounded in the ambulances heard it, and were glad. "Hark!" they would say. "Now he's getting back his own." And they would lie down, with shining eyes, upon their pillow.

At midnight we went up to a hill, and we could not tear ourselves away. Fiercer and fiercer grew the direful thunders, with a grim crescendo, while all the time wild flashes stabbed the dark, and flares flickered everywhere. There were mesmeric fascinations in the thought that away in front of us the titanic struggle between hell and the liberty of the ages was in process, and that the finest manhood of our age was enduring its passion, maimed, slain, yet stumbling, leaping, laughing forward through such a glory of effort, achievement, and sacrifice as never before was known. We were like children, silenced by the stupendous wonder of it.

Then back through the Dressing Station swept the balance of the price that had been

paid for the beginning of the day of liberty. Every place filled to overflowing. There were men from Aberdeen and Glasgow with their torn and bloody tartans, men from Devonshire and Cumberland, men from far places over the sea, swirled out of the inferno which had spattered them with mud and blood, and pierced them with bullet and splinter.

It was a most memorable sight, those fellows, bearing all over them the alphabet of the story of their colossal struggle—their faces grimed with the smoke and dust and sweat of battle, their clothes in ribbons and tatters—many of them utterly exhausted, some with the excitement of the fight upon them still, eager to convince everybody that the enemy were "on the run," and that we were "giving it to them in the neck." Some had to have their clothes cut off them. Some were giggling—some were unconscious, absolutely still, or softly moaning, or talking to invisible comrades. That was a time of toil for all workers, patient, unremitting, without haste and without rest.

It is then that one learns how little those who come through such a crisis can tell, except in regard to what is at the end of their

arm or in the immediate circle of their vision. I was anxious about a young officer. In answer to my inquiries one said, "I seen him fa' deid." "Ay," said another, "his richt side was torn oot wi' a shell." But I began to feel, somehow, with a sort of second sight, that he was coming along some time.

That night I went into one of the tents to keep myself busy, till what I hoped for should happen. There is nothing more impressive than a tent of these suffering men at that time, so still it is, so dim and prayerful. There was one boy near the door —a Scottish lad who had been a gunner. He seemed to be very weak, and I went over to his side. He thought I was his mother, and he said, "Put your arm under my head, mummy. I'll be easier then." And as I did so he began to say the Lord's Prayer, as so often he must have said it in the quiet hour at home, when the light was low, ere the curtain of sleep came down between him and another day. He went through the prayer, groping in the middle of it, with a blind kind of stumbling difficulty. "Kiss me," he whispered, and I kissed him; and tucked him into his blanket as his mother used to

do when he was a boy. And then he fell asleep, to wake no more on pain or weariness in any hour thereafter. I passed from one to another; and when I found one lying wide-eyed in the stillness I sat down beside him quietly for a little while. We do not need to pray in uttered words, in such a moment, on the verge of night. And some lifted up their brows for a good-bye touch ere I turned to go. Pulpits are cold places, spoken words seem empty, after that. Phrases would falter into tears if one tried to speak.

When I went out it was raining, big heavy drops falling through the black night, like weeping out of somewhere. And the ambulances were steadily coming in. I stood among the others with a lantern, and looked into the face of every man that was carried past. And lo! after sixty or so had gone by, there was the face of the man I sought for, looking up at me. What a shout of recognition passed between us, as he was carried on, through the rain, to the tent.

The people at home have reason to be proud of their boys, their husbands, and their sweethearts. The dawn of the Big Push broke through a heavy mist, and the

continuous crash of the big guns tore the German trenches till they were like a ploughed field. And when the order was given, the men went "over the top," and walked across the slope, as cool as if on field manœuvres, and smote the terror-stricken foe into defeat. There were no jealousies then. Said one Englishman to me, "We were to support the Highlanders. They got it hot from machine guns. And for a moment my heart stood still, as we saw their line swerve under it for a breathing space —for you know, sir, what splendid stickers the kilties be."

"My God!" said another. "The Germans fear the kilts. If we'd all had kilts the war might have been over by now!"

The bitter lessons of former advances were written deep on our memory. Everybody knew what he was to do, and where he was to go. There was no risk taken, as formerly, when the forward rush of impetuously brave regiments had carried them beyond the reach of reinforcements, and failure had come swiftly up on the heels of success.

We shall be beginning again soon. But the men are under no delusions. They have

clearly before them the facts that, no matter what it is costing, it is a price not only to be paid but worth the paying, and that the Germans must have no weak-kneed mercy shown them; for they have not played the game, and can only understand the meaning of the evil they have loosened on the world when they see it flattened in indubitable defeat, and crushed into absolute impotence for the future. That is why we all object to pictures in the daily Press of grinning groups in khaki as types of what we are. We are not downhearted, but we know too well the inner significance of war to pose like idiots at a picnic.

IN THE HIGHLANDS

The wind and the wave at their wildest
  Are beating upon the isle,
And you, for all that was dearest
  Are absent, many a mile.
The corn is ready for gathering,
  Whenever the skies are blue;
So we light our lamp in the gloaming,
  And silently think of you.

Dear lad! we can never forget you,
  Who went with the willing men,
When the call for the best came ringing
  Along by the moor and glen.
Your dust is asleep in Flanders,
  Because your heart was true;
So we light our lamp in the gloaming
  And silently think of you.

'Tis not a long road to the meeting,
  When the world's deep pain is o'er.
We'll patiently toil till the shadows
  Sink over the sea and shore;
And then, when the last hour's sinking,
  And we wait for the Love we knew,
We'll light our lamp in the gloaming,
  And silently think of you.

L. McL. W.

VII

THE SOLDIER'S RELIGION

A GREAT deal has been spoken and written on the subject of the religion of our army. When I was out first, at the beginning of the war, nothing impressed me more than the deep atmosphere of devotion which pervaded the men in the camps. This was, after all, most natural, for the men who were carried oversea on the first wave of the movement were the absolute cream of the country, borne out of the professions and the trades on a great impulse of enthusiasm, stirred to the depth by the noblest ideals. They had willingly turned their backs on home and friends, on love and comfort, for the sake of all that was very dear and precious. And it meant everything to them; so that they were susceptible in the very highest degree. Volunteers in every great cause are always idealists. The tide of religion that swept over them was like a vast

contagion of enthusiasm; and one can never forget what it meant in the Y.M.C.A. huts, and places where prayer was wont to be made. Had the war finished in the first few months I do believe the returning wave of life that had been touched by passionate faith would have lifted our old world to the feet of Christ. But the war has dragged on its weary length, and the mass of humanity in khaki in the Land of War is much more miscellaneous, while religion is much more a matter of the individual to-day than it was then. Men are touched and uplifted, out of their own experiences. A man feels his own circumstances much more intensely. Prayer, or rather prayerfulness, is a thing that falls around him in his moment of particular stress. For example, a North of Ireland man, who had lain out wounded for three days between the trenches, said to me, "I had surrendered hope, but not faith. And when at last I was tenderly picked up and carried out of it, I felt that my prayers had been answered, and that I was right to believe in God."

My own experience confirms this. It is very difficult in a moment of immediate personal danger to remember the danger of

others, for it is strange how suddenly crowded your heart and brain become. I have never had the feeling which some drowning men have had, of all one's past life rushing by in a close-packed procession, but under shell fire something not unlike it is awakened by the screaming death that hurtles overhead. One cannot easily avoid a spasm of prayerfulness then, but it has within it a sudden question as to the selfishness of the individual thought, and one finds the cry for the protection of others leap swiftly to the heels of the prayer for one's own safety. Above all, you pray for steadfastness, for the fear of being afraid is our greatest fear then. Sometimes, too, more strongly than on other occasions, there comes a strange assurance that the horrid missile is not for you. In my first baptism of fire I felt that, as certain as my own existence; and yet I believe I shall never again be nearer death until I cross the threshold of the invisible. Into my heart or head—I cannot quite say which—came these words of my favourite psalm:

> The Lord's my light and saving health,
> Who shall make me dismayed?

It kept ringing all the time, until I could scarcely believe that I had not been shouting it aloud. I suppose something like that has been within the experience of every one in similar circumstances; and yet perhaps I have not felt so sure of safety in later times of danger. It is what your self comes through that makes and shapes your faith, and the most subtle arguments can never shake it thereafter. "I have seen, therefore I do believe," is the impregnable result. Hence it is that the religion of our army to-day in the field is much more personal than it was formerly, in proportion as the soul has looked more closely into the great Mystery, in the actual Valley of the Shadow itself. The enthusiasms of the earlier day might not have endured in the return to home conditions; the eyes that have been opened to-day will never be blind again. It will not mean a rally to the uplifted shibboleths of ancient sects, but it must result in a strengthened hold upon the real meaning of the immanence of the Divine in everything that has true significance for the destiny of humanity. The individual is, and always has been, the moulder of the mass. You are not to expect an army

of saints and enthusiasts coming back, with shining faces, when the men return. Many will be just as intensely difficult, perhaps more intensely difficult, social problems as before they left to fight for king and country. But multitudes have been touched with the mystery of the Unseen. They have rubbed shoulders with Life and Death and seen the eternal shining before them in the dark hour. They have made vows and resolutions for the better life. These things will influence the days that are to be, if the fire in their hearts be not quenched by coldness in the hearts of the people at home, and the song that has been stirred by the revelation of noble ideals be not silenced by the revival of old selfishnesses here.

The formal religion of the old soldier is sometimes a very strange thing. I heard of one who, when asked, said, "Let me see. I think I was Roman Catholic in the South African War. I'd better be the same in this." While another was put down in the hospital list as "Fatalist." When I asked him why, he replied that it was to save trouble. But after I had shown him that he only gave trouble, I found he was willing to be a Methodist or "anything decent."

Something which cannot be analyzed or described seems to enter into supreme suffering. I remember one young Scotsman—stalwart, blue-eyed, and patient, with his face severely burned, his hair and beard like charcoal, and his eyes almost sealed up by the scorching flame that had seared him, saying to me, when I asked him how he was, "Oh, I'm fine, thank you. Ye ken, a body maun do his duty." And the reply of another was, "I canna complain. I'm nae that bad, efter an' a'."

This patience seems sometimes almost as much a gift conferred as faith itself. One day, after a big fight, I saw a fine fellow having his back dressed. He had just been brought in, with several wounds, one especially terrible in its severity. But he made neither motion nor sound. A soldier said to me, "That poor chap is paralyzed. He has no feeling." Just then, everything being completed, the bandage was put on, and he was turned over. All his pent-up endurance broke forth in a cry of agony, "Oh, my God —I am done in!" I slipped very quietly forward, and he looked up in my face with a smile. "Pardon me, Padre," he said. "I was a fool. I had no right to speak, when

I'm sure there are many worse than me here." What a brave fight he made, day by day, always giving us a bright welcome and a quiet good-night, till he could recognize us no more, and passed to his rest, outworn. One felt as though a brother had died, and you could not help looking next day for the brave face on the pillow, which so often had nerved us, who were strong, for the work that awaited us.

And it was usually so. One day a poor boy was crying aloud that he could not endure the pain of what was but a comparatively slight wound. I tried to steady him by the old plan of directing his attention to the greater suffering which was being quietly borne by those around him. But he pointed to his neighbour in the adjacent bed, and said, "That's all very well, but he is comfortable compared with me." "Yes, chum," replied the other, "I have only twelve wounds, that have to be dressed three times daily." It made more than the complaining man think a little; and he hushed his cries for a while.

Some of the Scottish came down about this time—a fine set of stalwarts. One of them, in great pain, said to me, "It's a wild

game this, maister." They seemed to think of it, wondrously fittingly, as a scramble—the wildest sport, surely, in which men ever shared, with life for football, and death clutching in the "scrum."

The people at home can have no conception of what the preparations for a great advance are like. Everywhere one felt that something colossal was ripening. A vast activity was constantly clattering along the roads. The stream of cavalry, the great heavy guns, the field kitchens that rattled sleep out of the dark hours, the waggons whose passing shook the loosened plaster down from the walls of wayside houses, the train-loads of infantry who cheered out of their horse-boxes as they were carried up the line through the level crossings, all told of the accumulating of a stupendous force for something out of the ordinary.

All the time rumour ran wild. She has a habit of doing so, gabbling as she runs. I cannot forget what we felt when the first news of the Jutland battle seemed to intimate something like disaster at sea. For some days it kept a heavy shadow and a curious stillness over us, as though a grey haar had drifted in from the face of the

waters. And again, when there came a night whisper of the loss of the *Hampshire,* with Kitchener and his staff on board. Along with that, like a clumsy codicil to a sensational will, was a statement that the German Crown Prince had surrendered at Verdun. The codicil seemed to us to make the other statement invalid. But alas! the one was only too true, while its neighbour was a lie. And then, as the reality of the loss soaked into our consciousness, we felt that surely at last the country would be awakened truly to the actual stern facts of the war, that those who were dwelling in a fool's paradise would be convinced of their folly, and those who were hindering the sorely needed supplies of munitions would be ashamed of their selfishness. As a soldier said to me, "It was terrible in the beginning of the war, when we were scarce of men and material, when we were just hanging on, and could do little more, and sometimes scarcely that, to think how the people at home seemed to be forgetful, with their strikes and complacent maxims, of how much it meant for us." Germany kept herself wide-eyed, fostering her strength for the great day. I suppose that for years past

scarce a man in Germany has stooped to loose or lace his boots, but the shadow of what was coming stooped with him. We had to face a very severe operation for our national cataract, and swallow at a gulp a very bitter tonic when Tragedy struck the gong awaking Europe to the horror of war.

The Chaplain sometimes gets a curious tonic against the complacency which is apt to settle over every official. I was amazed one day, after I had prayed with a rough-looking man, when he clutched my arm and prayed, also, for the young lives that were suffering, and for the chaplains, doctors, and nurses—a beautiful and touching prayer. He was a Wesleyan, and certainly I found these among the most devout and patient men I ever met, with the "root of the matter" in them.

The uncertainties of things are very vividly learned by us out here. A little Welsh lad asked me to write his mother, who was offering to send him gifts. "Tell her," said he, "that I'm down for home, and I'll not be here when they arrive." I wrote to her accordingly; and next day when I went to see him his bed was empty. In the night he had quietly and suddenly passed

away in his sleep. There are more ways home than across the Channel. Our words are sometimes more prophetic than we know.

The men were not at that time bitter against the Germans, though they strongly resented the brutality of their conduct. One boy, wounded severely through the chest, had serious complications added to his condition by having been compelled to lie out all day. He pointed along to a bed in the tent. "That's another German they're nursing," said he. "We are kinder to their wounded than they are to ours. That's why I'm here like this, for I had to lie out there till I nearly died. Two of my chums started to crawl after they were struck down; but the Germans shot them dead, for they fired on all our wounded. So I lay still till the dark." And many told the same sad story.

In the Big Push of July 1916 I spoke to a wounded South African Scot. He had been in the forest fighting, so terribly unspeakable in its intensity; and he told me that some of the Medical Corps had gone forward to help some wounded Germans. After they had succoured them and given them water, and were departing, the mis-

creants turned and shot their benefactors dead. Judgment followed swift, however, upon the unspeakable crime.

Sometimes one could not keep from laughing even at one's fellow-countrymen. I came across one, solemn, long-faced and lantern-jawed, the most depressed figure I have seen in this war-time. "What's the matter?" I asked. And he answered in most lugubrious tones, "I've a sair inside." Later on I saw him standing in solitary melancholy among some others who were merry, and I said, "Cheer up, man. Why are you so dowie?" But he replied, with some indignation, "Because I've a sair inside. And I dinna ken naebody here."

Truly our Scottish nature is a most remarkable conglomerate. Many a rash inquirer has lost his way in its countless ramifications. Nobody can be more sociable than a Scot. In fact, his weaknesses, which have sometimes made the world blush, arise most frequently from this sociable tendency. Yet nobody can dwell more apart, at times, from his fellows. Not infrequently I have heard —"I aye keeps mysel' to mysel' in the regiment." At the same time, nobody can be capable of more varied nobilities, and even

almost grotesque splendours of sacrifice, for the sake of an ideal. For example, I knew a man so delicate that he had to follow an indoor occupation all his life, and yet he made no fewer than twenty attempts to enlist at the beginning of the war, trying every branch of the service except the Royal Army Medical Corps. I suggested this last to him, as he might be of use in an ambulance. But he who had knocked so often at the doors of recruiting offices, and had stood in bitter weather in the long lines of those who wished to fight their nation's battles, shook his head and grew pale. "Ach, no!" he said, with a shudder, "ye see, the sicht o' bluid aye gars me grue."

It is not a unique experience to find the truly brave warrior anything but a bloodthirsty villain. Most of them are quiet, "cannie" men, sensitive to the beauty of the world, and of all sweet and tender things. At a time when many kind folks at home were sending white heather as a loving message across the sea, I saw a letter from one who had been a game-keeper in times of peace, and who certainly had not walked the woods and fields with eyes shut and heart barred against the pleadings

of Nature's glamour and the charm of the wilds. Here are a few paragraphs to prove it. He said:

"I was just going to ask you to send me a sprig of white heather, so you will know how pleased I was to get what you sent. How sweetly it smells, and what pleasant memories it recalls to an exile! Never was heather more highly prized. You know the song, *My Ain Folk*? Well, it sums up the situation. There is no place like old Scotland to me, and that heather speaks to my heart and memory. I can imagine myself treading the moors, gun in hand. I can hear the 'Come back! come back!' of an old cock grouse as he gets up far out of shot. Then the drive home, tired but happy; and some one standing at the door asking what sort of day we have had. Then tea, and the day's doings gone over again—the shots we missed, and how we got a brace here and snipe there. These were happy days, which I hope, with God's help, will be yet renewed. . . . I have met some very nice chaps in my travels; but now, of course, everybody is in this, and it is not like the soldiering of old. I have even had a pleasant chat with a poacher, who told me tales,

with much zest, of how he had killed salmon and snared rabbits. I hope he will be spared to return and wield the rod and cleek again, even though it may cost somebody trouble to watch him. . . . There are some nice coveys of partridges where we are, and I often take a dander just to have the pleasure of seeing them in the evening-time."

Is it a wonder that there is something in a Chaplain's life worth having when there are men with feelings like these to mix with and to share a quiet talk, often? The Universities at home have emptied; but in the land of war there is a great college of human nature where a man with a responsive soul may learn deeper things than ever a lecture-room held for him in the days that are no more.

He learns that tender domestic affection, fidelity to the hearts at home, and manhood true till death for honour's sake are things that are not far from the kingdom of heaven. And he believes in the Mercy of God and the pity of Christ more than he ever did before. There are things that transcend our creeds, and more ways to heaven than theologians have ever squabbled over.

VIII

THE MEANING OF THINGS

How little the usual short paragraph in the newspaper conveys to the easy-minded folks at home of what may be the significance of an apparently trivial move. You read that a raid was made on the enemy's lines at So-and-so, and useful information gained. But what we know, on the spot, is that perhaps forty men went out over No Man's Land, and bombed and bayoneted the enemy in a trench forward in the night. Three were killed, five are crawling in, and fifteen or sixteen returned wounded more or less severely. That little party, creeping along back to our trenches, through the gloom, or in the misty morning, or lying all day in a hole, waiting for the pitiful cover of the darkness for another stage, or for help to come, does not easily slip from imagination and memory. And as you peep out over the ruin-entangled dismal bit of ground in which they lie somewhere wait-

ing, it is a big slice of concentrated human history that is graven on your heart. Yet there are many at home into whose minds that fact does not percolate, because they cannot steel themselves to listen to the truth, or because they prefer to live in a fool's paradise. Nothing can be worse or more entirely reprehensible than the heart shut and the eye closed against the splendid sacrifice and sufferings of the brave.

Let it be known widely and thoroughly that every day and every hour this terrible thing is prolonged Tragedy and Cruelty are having a longer innings against civilization, and that the sooner the hideous ambition which plunged our sunny world into blackness of pain is crushed and slain the sooner will hope, and liberty, and life, and love have scope again. If it is not folly, it is cowardice and betrayal of the brave, otherwise. Let the people at home have the chance of facing things fully and squarely, in knowledge as clear as those who suffer out here, and the full victory which alone can bring peace shall come swiftly.

I remember a raw officer who stood beside some of us, while a terrible bombardment shook the night. In the bravado of

inexperience he said with a laugh, "That won't keep me from my sleep." We said nothing; but, in the morning, after I had buried some of the boys who had suffered, I said to him, in a place apart, "Don't ever speak like that again to those who know. What did not affect you meant death to men as brave as any of us could be, and sorrow unspeakable to hearts as dear as any whom we love." And he understood. For, after all, he was no fool, as subsequent events amply proved.

The interest which the people of the French towns and villages showed at the beginning of the war in the Scottish soldiers has not abated. The pipers are the great centre of interest in France, however, and the wild flourish of the drummers thrills the crowd. In big towns, just as much as in sleepy villages, the excitement is great when in the evening the kilted fellows swing down to the square to play the "Retreat," with which the day of a Highland corps is closed. I remember what a cosmopolitan mob got around our men in one place. Our own Indians of every kind, Algerians and Nigerians, and all sorts of French soldiers, as well as the representative classes of the

place, formed a great circle, and loud was the applause which greeted the performance. The pipers played the well-known march founded on the melody known to Highlanders as *Tha an cuan a chuir eagal air clann'a nan Gaidheal*—"The sea's putting fear on the sons of the Gael," that is, the fear which is the awe that springs from sorrow of parting. And as it rang through that square, waking echoes among the tall houses in a foreign land, one could not help thinking of the grief in the glens and through the islands away across the waters, when one remembered that in Skye alone there is scarcely a home, if indeed there be any, that does not miss for ever on earth the footfall and the voice of a beloved one. And it means for us, the children of the Gael, something which I think is more than for other folks. It means the thinning out of an ancient race, the fading of one of the old languages of Europe, and a great unbridged blank in a generation. The changes which have taken place in the Highlands in a century have been vast, but this war means something as swift and sudden as the blowing out of a candle, or the drawing of a curtain—for many wide districts, indeed, the

end of an old song. Think what that piping meant in some of the French villages, when the pipers played in the dark on Hogmanay night, "taking in the New Year," in places where such music had never been heard before.

What a lesson for the divided Churches at home is often given us here! And especially where the dead are laid to rest. There is no wall of division in the last sleep. Roman Catholic is laid between Episcopalian and Presbyterian. There is no distinction. God sorts out the souls of the brave, who lie side by side till the day of the Great Awakening. A burial service in St. Paul's is poor alongside of ours, where the guns thunder out responses and amens to the committal words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord." It might amaze our domestic bigots, of all faiths, to find Jesuit priest and Presbyterian minister working and sleeping in wondrous unity. I shared a tent for some time with a Jesuit Father. I am a true blue Presbyterian, and he was a strong Jesuit; but my Presbyterianism was not contaminated by his Jesuitry, nor his Jesuitry touched by my Presbyterianism. I carried always the flag of my coun-

try, which is the flag of my faith, and fixed it up wherever we were, and when the Roman Catholic soldier wanted to find his priest he found him by coming to where the Presbyterian banner hung beside our door. We were often quietly teased as "the Incorporated Society of St. Peter and St. Andrew." The principal Chaplain, who is an Irish Presbyterian, has as his personal staff two priests of another Order; while the lists of decorations awarded to Roman Catholic chaplains prove that they certainly by no means suffer through association with our Protestant Churches.

Nothing can be more moving than the bugle ringing out "The Last Post" over the sleeping brave. That call is a real bit of poetry; and the heart almost breaks on the last upward note, half-question and half-faith, calling heavenward through the void. I can never forget the power of it once, at home, when we unveiled a monument to those who had fallen in South Africa. The street was crowded with people. A deep cloud was gathering along the hills. I got the Colonel to read the long list of the fallen, the roll-call of heroes. Then the buglers blew "The Last Post." And, as if in an-

swer to the summons, out of the mountains dashed a blast of hail, as though the shades of the dead swept by. The crowd cowered before it, their faces white with awe, as having been touched by the breath of the Unseen. Out here, when that pleading note rises heavenwards, I seem to be present at the resurrection morn. The men feel it also. For sentiment is always very near the surface of a soldier, especially in an army such as ours at present is. My first servant was an old soldier, whose fighting days began in the Soudan, and in every subsequent campaign he had borne his share. His only boy and he had fought in the same struggle in this war, and the lad fell. And sometimes, in the shadows of evening, he would talk a little; and then his voice would deepen into feeling, and he would say: "Sir, a body canna help but think; and I do my thinking oftenest in the nicht-time, when I canna sleep. I never go to lie down in my bed but I mind my laddie, lyin' oot yonder, withoot a sod to cover him, in the dark. An auld sodger disna greet often, but whiles I wish sairly that I could just put my heid doon, and find the ease o' tears." I do indeed believe that as heavy a burden as our men

have often to bear is just this burden of tears unshed.

And it is a kind of personal faith that upholds them. I told recently of the power of the individual experience in the moulding of the religion of the soldier. I recall a striking instance, confirmatory of this fact. I was passing through a tent of wounded men, and spoke for a little to one whose face and arms had been flayed by the sun. He was a man of considerable education. It was apparent, of course, that he had been lying out for a while. After a brief talk I passed on. But, moved by a sudden impulse, I turned back and prayed with him. "Padre," he said, "I did not always believe in that sort of thing. But now I believe. I was lying in a shell hole, badly hit. And the sun was burning me like flame. So I cried out somehow in my heart that it might abate its torture. And slowly a little cloud, like a veil, stole over the sun's face, and I found relief. And then I really prayed that the night might be so dark as to permit a search party to get out my length, or that I might be able to creep in near our lines. And the night came down, moonless and starless, and black as pitch. Was that not an an-

swer to my cry? At any rate, I can never forget; and remembrance holds me firm to my belief."

Sometimes one finds in the Scottish soldier a wonderful faith, but, much more than with the Englishman, an attachment to the kirk or the minister at home. In fact, the case is exceedingly rare of a Scotsman without Church connection of some kind. If one meets it, the man is usually deeply ashamed, and does not quite acknowledge it. I remember one who had a stammer, and who came from the vicinity of my own parish. "What church do you go to?" I asked. And he replied, "Eh-eh-eh—I forget its name." "But," I persisted, "you'll remember the name of your minister?" And then, with a whimsical look of perplexity, he said, amid the laughter of his comrades, "Eh-eh-eh. Dod, if it hisna gane clean oot o' my heid." Another was "kirkgreedy." And one day, as I was going through his tent, he began to weep aloud. A sister said, "Why are you crying, Mac?" "I'm greetin'," he sobbed, "because I see my minister comin'."

Even in very desperate circumstances a Scotsman's humour does not forsake him. One day an English orderly said to me,

"There's a big Scotsman here, with a sore head wound, practically unconscious, and we can't get anything either out of him or into him. Would you speak to him?" He had the Gordon kilt below his bed, so I had at least one hint to go upon. In broad Aberdonian, I said, "Faur are ye frae, man?" And his voice, strangely far away, replied, "Frae Aiberdeen, of coorse—faur ither?" "You're a Gordon, aren't you?" I asked. "Of coorse. Fat else wad I be?" was the answer. The orderly gave me a spoon and asked me to get him to take what was in it. But he began to try to drink instead of supping. So I said to him, "It's a speen, man. It's nae a bottle." "Ay," said again that far-off voice, with a touch of fun in it, "but maybe I'm mair accustomed to a bottle." He kept asking if we were not near the shore yet. I fancy the flapping canvas of the tent made him think he was on board a ship, sailing for home.

One sees hard enough cases out here, but the hardest I have seen was that of a man who was really only a small bundle lying in bed. They had been cleaning up billets where he was, and somebody had thrown a lot of cartridges in the fire along with some

swept-up straw and rubbish. Just as he was standing warming himself these had exploded, and the carelessness of his comrades had cost him his right eye, his right leg and arm. Many a man would have cursed his destiny, but this little Irishman only smiled sadly, and said, "The only thing I'm sorry for is that it wasn't in the firing line, and not in battle, that I got it."

His case was very different from that of another with a deep wound in his thigh. He was indeed a man with a charmed life. For he had been going up the trench with bombs in his pocket, when a piece of shell had struck him on the leg. If it had struck the bombs he would have been among the stars in a second.

Yet another was perfectly happy, although his wound had been caused by a shell from our own guns. "It's one of Lloyd George's," said he, "and I don't grudge it. I only hope there's plenty more coming out, for that means victory."

May the folks at home answer his hope fully!

IX

OFFICERS AND MEN

A DEPARTMENT which is much forgotten by the people at home is the transport in the field. The officers in charge of that have to be wise men, brave soldiers, and companions of the order of the kindly heart. I saw that in the Gordons, very strikingly.

When we were on a long trek, the quartermaster always rode off in early morning, long before the dawn, to the place which was to be our terminus, and there he had a hard and busy time fixing up billets for us all. At the last stage of our daily march he appeared again at the head of the column, and guided us to the close of our journey. I often wondered if he knew how his appearance was welcomed right along the ranks. The men would say: "There's the captain. We'll soon be all right." When operations were on, his tired eyes knew no sleep, his kind heart kept awake, his feet knew no weariness, while the men had to be

helped and their comfort seen to. All day and half the night he toiled without a grudge. For he was a true soldier of the old breed, a type of the best the British Army can produce; and he knew, for he had often himself experienced, the hardships of the march, the conflict, and the camp. He had won distinction for fearless courage and devoted attention to duty everywhere, and the double row of ribbons on his breast has amongst them more than one proof of courage in the field. His tunic is, in fact, a bit of the history of the British Empire, over long years of service. I have been beside him in some trying and unpleasant moments, and I know his soul. When he has secured the best possible for officers and men, a brick floor in a kitchen somewhere, or a muddy corner anywhere, was enough for him. And when any one asked, "Where's the captain?" we would say, "Oh, he's all right. Give him two bricks, a blanket, and a draught, and he's sure of a dreamless sleep." His campaigning spread over five or six years at least, altogether. Men in offices and at Base jobs figure often in dispatches, but none deserve more thanks of soldiers and of citizens than such war-

hardened and war-aged officers, who are to be found steadily and constantly enduring and achieving, without haste, without rest, and without waste, in all our areas of activity at the front, to-day and always.

Every night when the men are in the trenches he goes up with the transport corps, with food and water, along roads that are torn to pieces by bombardment, swept periodically by machine gun and shell, and blocked frequently by wreckage, human and material. Often he and his men have to lie in ditches till the hail of death passes by. But the rations go up. The task is never dodged. Death alone would be valid excuse in such a case for quartermaster and transport officer.

The latter, with us, in the Gordons, is a man who never before served in any army. He was once a rancher in Montana and elsewhere. He has a beautiful home in quiet fields in England. But he has gone through harder times than many a trained soldier, without flinching and without talk, and no dispatch has ever seen his name in it up to date. He is quite contented, having done his duty.

But with all of them it is the same. Our

transport officer in the Black Watch was a young farmer from the Forfarshire Highland line. And every evening he goes up with his men as calmly as though he were only taking a turn around his farmyard ere he went in for the night. And the quartermaster, a quiet man whose dreams are of his garden, near the sea, shares the journey, wondering if he will ever again potter about his bushes with his pruning shears in a summer evening, forgetting the shadows of to-day.

As for the men of the transport, they are also worthy of a nation's thanks, though they seldom, if ever, are thought of for gratitude by anybody. Because, of course, it is only their duty, also, after all. The tailors, shoemakers, servants, and disabled are amongst them. But they are brave as any who have ever faced danger in the dark. Our pipers and drummers in the Gordons are now with them. And one night one of our oldest men, a piper, who had left a good easy situation in London and rejoined for the war—a man nearer sixty than fifty—showed the stuff that was in him. They were going up the "duckboards" when a shower of shrapnel came over, and every-

body at once took cover. "Where have they gone to?" asked the quartermaster. And the piper leapt forward and cried, "Come on, you beggars! Follow me, and I'll show you how a Gordon goes through that." The men rallied to the cry, and went up through it all, and brought the rations to the waiting trench. Less than that has got a D.C.M. before now.

The lives of the men in general make a personal appeal of irresistible power to those who live and work among them. You hear it from those who, after all, are mere passing visitors, who work at Base camps and come in contact with them only at a distance from the sphere of activities, and who are impressed by the distant roar of the guns, or even the sound of artillery at practice, if, indeed, they ever hear any. But when you live with them at the front, and are touched, all around, by their devotion, courage, and strength of heart, it never can leave your memory. A chat over a cup of coffee in a Church hut or a walk through a Base hospital is enlightening and moving, but it misses the full-eyed gaze into the grim, terrible, and wonderful reality which is given to the Chaplain of a regiment. Be-

cause, naturally, it misses the source of it all. And it is fine to learn and know that this is not the feeling and experience of the Chaplain only, but of the officers who command and lead those bravest of the brave. One, home on sick leave, said to me: "If I am spared to return to civil life, after the war is over, I don't know what I'll do. I'll be so utterly lonely without the boys. They are so kind and true. One can joke with them and be frank with them, and yet they never presume, or take a liberty with one's frankness." And this is my own experience. The army is a bit of real ore in the mud of war. And the future of the Empire should be much enriched by the passing of this precious element through the present furnace of trial.

Of course, much of this depends on the kind of officer. The Gordon battalion with which I served was in my day fortunate above many in this respect. To begin with, it is one of the original Highland regiments, whose record is encrusted with glory of imperial service; but our commanding officer was the ideal leader and friend of the men whom he led. His thoughts were always with them. He was a man of notable

courage, the testimony to which he wore deservedly on his breast. I remember how, at the end of a long march, he would not sit down till he had gone over the billets to see if his men were all right and comfortably housed. And his kind-heartedness won its full reward in the joy with which they served him and the loyalty with which they followed him unhesitatingly to victory or death. I thought that I should never weep again; but when I heard, not long since, how he fell, I went into a quiet place and wept like a woman over her son. For he was a Bayard, without fear and without reproach. Thank God! he is not the only one in the ranks of the brave to-day. For a regiment is like a family, and takes its tune and tone from the head of the house.

One cannot sometimes keep from laughing, even in circumstances of great danger, to hear what engages the attention of the men. Once, when the transport was going up, a burst of bombardment broke across them. And seeing some excitement forward, we rode along in case of anything having happened. But it was just a couple of men quarrelling, even amidst shot and

shell, as to the wages that were paid to the moulders at Falkirk.

A friend of mine similarly thinking, during a heavy shell-fire, that a tragedy had taken place in a dug-out, from the loud-voiced talk which was going on, crept up near, and heard one Scotsman laying down the law to another. "You're wrang, Sandy," he was shouting. "Harry Lauder made his first appearance in the Paveelion in Glesca. I was there, and I mind it fine." And the crash of artillery deafened the other's reply. Another told me how, after a terrible bit of fighting, when he got shelter, a man, whom he knew, crept in beside him, and all he could think of saying was, "Hullo, when did you get your stripe?"

Every day I used to go up the trenches when the Gordons were in them, to chat with the men. It cheered them, I think, to see one who was not a combatant walking freely there. And if there was anything coming over, I liked to get along to its locality, for I have seen the presence of a non-fighting man, without weapons, steady the young fellows, who might, for a little, feel panicky. One day, in the middle of a hot time, a shell landed right in the river which ran quite

near, and it threw up a most beautiful geyser of blue water into the sunshine. It lifted everybody's mind off the horrid episode through which we were passing, and a whisper of admiration ran along the trench.

It is amusing, also, to observe how the men receive anything which the enemy achieves. One day, in camp, there was not a speck of any kind in the sky—a peculiarly quiet day it was. Overhead hung an observation balloon, one of the many eyes of the army. We had grown to feel this as a real neighbour. Suddenly an aeroplane, with the British markings on it, swept along, and "poppity-popped" at the balloon, and then swung by. But it instantly turned, swooped back, and rattled a salvo into the swaying bag of gas, which at once ignited, flinging up a great dark flame, and the attacker sped swiftly away. The riddled balloon, blazing, began to sink, and the observer leapt overboard with his parachute, dropping like a stone till within one hundred feet of the ground, when the parachute opened, and he landed safely. "Thae Germans is getting very forward, sir," said one of our men to me.

It was, of course, an act of revenge for

what had happened just about a week previously, when we saw a German observation balloon drifting across our lines. There was great excitement, for the salient was long and narrow, and he might get into the enemy's sphere and drop into safety. All at once, like vultures swooping out of space above a battlefield, distant specks appeared, which grew, as they sped forward from the far heavens, into aeroplanes, and one of them dashed at the drifting balloon and riddled it. The observer had got himself entangled by his arm and leg in the cordage, but he got down safely, and was captured. The cheering over this event had a most remarkable effect. Close at hand it rang like a trumpet-call, and then you heard it all around, till at last, far off, it seemed as faint as a dying echo. A whole countryside had joined in the jubilation.

The relationships between battalions of the same regiment sometimes evoke tenderly touching episodes. For instance, as we drew near the lines, after a long march, the guns flashing welcome, we saw a host of kilted fellows running through a field towards the muddy road, where they lined up on either side to wait our coming. It was

one of our battalions, which had just come out of a very stubborn fight, with victory. Somehow it did bring the lump to one's throat as we walked through those welcoming lines of brave fellows, our brothers of the tartan, with many a kent face amongst them. The Chaplain, from Aberdeen, fell in beside me, and we had a long chat together as we walked. Their pipers took the place at our head, and played us along the road for Auld Langsyne. It must be very difficult for "frem'd folk" to understand the Scottish heart away from home. "You Scots are funny," said a man to me. "It would not matter much to me, an Englishman, who was in camp. But if there's a Scotsman anywhere, you fellows are beside him, having a crack, in no time." "John Tamson's bairns" do not forget easily the things that make home homely, no matter what waters have flowed and ebbed, since last they saw the old land. And it gives a fine touch to life everywhere. Long may it continue.

The farmhouse billets in France, in a march, are very varied. In most of them we slept on a brick floor, not uncomfortably, although one felt that he had discovered

the soft brick only too soon before revally. Every one of them had its midden right up to the door, just as in our Scottish farmhouses till the early part of the nineteenth century. In one place the farmhouse was an old family château, and the room we slept in had a beautiful scalloped ceiling. What had been a balcony or verandah ran along in front of the door, but the balustrade was long since gone. And a great sappy manure heap steamed where the lawn had been in ancient days. Where lords and ladies had walked and talked, the pigs now wallowed and grunted. One had to be careful in the dark, as the projecting steps left only a very narrow space between them and the savoury slough. We heard somebody leave the kitchen, talking, evidently to a visitor, and then there was a loud shout, followed by some military idiomatic reflections on things in general, and French middens in particular. Then my servant entered for instructions. One needed smelling salts for the interview. "Where have you been?" I asked. "In the midden, sir," said he; "but I managed to keep the other fellow undermost, and got off best." I was sorry for the billet companions of that other fellow that night.

Be brave, you folks at home, for the next few months. For there is to be a growing demand upon you for patience, prayerfulness, perseverance, and strength of heart, such as you have never been asked for, to uphold those who are facing all things for your sake.

X

BULLET AND SHELL

Shells are bad; trench mortars are worse; "whiz bangs" are most upsetting; but the sniper's bullet is the instrument of the Evil One. I have had four at me, so that I know what it feels like. You are awed by the others, but when a sniper's bullet goes past you like a dragon-fly, you feel angry for a minute or two, and inclined to write to the Chief-Constable. Somehow, it does not feel fair. It takes you at a disadvantage, and it seems to be at the moment a rudely personal attention. A shell on the other hand is not personal, unless you are in its way. The first time I got it was when coming down a short exposed road in the dark. It was a road where nobody had a right to go, but there was a notice forbidding traffic, and it was a short-cut, two convincing arguments for its use always. Perhaps it was hardly right to think of it as dark, for the star shells were bursting away behind us

occasionally, flooding everything with a gleaming kind of moonlight. You feel then as though you were fourteen feet high—a Goliath of Gath in a world of pygmies. Suddenly a bullet whipped past, and with a "putt" went into the bank by the roadside. You felt yourself very much in the way of something, and almost said "Beg pardon." The sergeant who was with me exclaimed, "Weel—if that's no' impudent." The next time, I was walking down a long gap—that is, a portion of the trench which is not manned by soldiers, but is protected by artillery. I suppose it is usually enfiladable by the enemy. It was a lovely afternoon, and I was due for furlough in a couple of days. I felt quite safe. All at once I heard a bullet ring out, like a shilling, against a broken brick wall by the side of the trench. "Somebody out in the open, surely, playing the fool," thought I. "Ping" rang the bullet once more. "Hello," said I to myself, "they're after somebody." But when the third "ping" sounded, it occurred to me, "By George—they're after me!" So I stopped, stooped down, and waited. And the grim stillness sank over everything again with a kind of creepy awe.

We set off from this district on a long march, spread over a fortnight or so. So cold by this time were the early mornings that we sometimes held our jaws with our hands to keep our teeth from rattling together. It was really too cold to ride, and walking with the men was much more enjoyable, though the roads were hard. The first day our fellows felt it somewhat severely. After having been in the trenches their feet were soft, and the heavy load which the soldier has to carry galled their shoulders. We marched through territory untouched by the blighting shadow of the times; and it was strange to see how the villages woke up as we passed, and to think how the little children would remember this greatest world war in history, most of all, by our passing. Some portions of the country through which we marched were steep, hilly, rolling land. The roads meant climbing, and sometimes the transport would stick, and the panting horses and mules had to be helped by the cooks and servants pushing behind the waggons. We were frequently reminded of the homeland—parts of Aberdeenshire about the Howe of Fyvie and around Turriff. It was extremely im-

pressive to reach the summit of a road and look forward over the heads of a whole regiment descending the slope, seeing it surmount the hill in front of you; and, still farther on, the long living line of khaki moving over the next ridge out of the hollow ahead, while behind you the same far-stretching mass was moving; and the breeze bore back to you snatches of the bagpipe march of the brave. A whole division with transport on trek is one of the most imposing and suggestive things the eye can look upon.

I marched behind a different company every day, and tried to keep the fellows cheery. The son of Rob Donn, the Gaelic poet, used to sing his father's songs to the men of his regiment in the Peninsula, just as the lame schoolmaster Tyrtæus gave the hearts of the Spartans an uplift in the far-back day in Greece. And song has still the same power. It is a thing that armies should cultivate for campaigning, for the march, and for the camp. If there is anything a soldier is thankful for it is the response to his prayer, "Chuck us a cheer." One day I got our fellows to sing *The Barrin' o' Oor Door,* and *Lintin Lowrin.* It

lifted the weary feet with a lighter spring along the heavy roads. And then silence sank on them. The burden was bowing them down. Some of them began to walk unsteadily, yet resolutely kept going, with head stooping forward and back bent. It is terrible to see a soldier all at once limp sorely, and you know that the blister on his heel has broken, and that he will be a lame man to-morrow. We were on the last lap that day, and going down a steep street, at the foot of which was a French hospital. The French soldiers, doctors, and nurses came out to the gate when they heard the skirl of the pipes. So I said to the men in front of me, "Buck up, you chaps. Our corps is second to none. Show how the men of the North can march." And the weary shoulders were straightened at once, and the tired feet took a wondrous spring into their limping, and the men went past the spectators as though at a review. But when the necessity was over, the effort relaxed, and we went forward to the finish like a band of beaten men.

And now we passed on into the world of mud and pitiless rain and raw wet chill. The roads were over ankle-deep. The bil-

lets were damp and cold. Fog and rain penetrated everywhere. We lay on the floor of a wretched hut one night, and as I turned round I struck a rat which was sleeping under my side. It ran away through the doorless shed with a step as heavy as a terrier.

Always, always, day and night, there the guns go. You awake out of a dream that somebody has left a swinging door slamming somewhere in a draught; and then it dawns upon you what is banging. And always, always, night and day through the muddy ways go the scrunching feet of long lines of marching men for the trenches, through the dripping rain. There are no grinning apes amongst them yonder for a photographic pose. Life is very serious when you are drenched to the bone, and your boots are sodden, and your shoulders red with the sagging straps of your equipment. You have more to think of than to grin then.

I got my own share of it on the evening of the first Sunday. My friend, with whom I had been previously, under similar experiences, went up with me. We turned off the muddy road, on to the "duckboards," or sparred gangway leading over the

muddy shell-torn ground toward the ruined trenches. Right over the sky-line came about sixty straggling men. A German aeroplane hovered above them, and then dropped some smoke signals, and a blast of shell-fire swept across the ground, the men scuttering off like wild fowl into holes for shelter. We waited for a little and then made a bolt through it, leaving it thankfully behind. But when we reached the end of the boards, with still about thirty yards to go, I stepped right up to the waist into solid mud which gripped me like a cork in a bottle. The more I tried to get out the deeper I went in. My friend ran back, but could not pull me out. In a water hole near by were three or four men, and they waded across at great risk. With their help I got free. I sent on word with my friend that I was coming, and sat down on a mud-heap to rest a little, while the fellows went back to the hole. But just then the shells swept round and came over us in very swift succession, falling everywhere with a plump into the mud, which sent up dirt and stones. Next moment, with a roar they burst, flinging into the air fragments of iron with a red-hot core in the centre of them. The

gunners were searching that corner very thoroughly, for they must have had a very good idea of where Headquarters' dug-out was. And the shells swept in semicircles for about forty minutes, ever nearer, till I felt sure the next was for me. All the time these poor fellows in the water were ducking, and clinging to the side of the broken trench, till at last the shells went off farther afield, and troubled us no more.

There is a kind of fascination in an experience like that, somewhat like what Livingstone felt when underneath the lion's paw. You wait for the smash, saying, "Very well. Let it come. I cannot help it." And at the same time you cannot escape seeing a humorous episode even in the midst of it. While the shells were passing away from us a voice kept calling for Corporal Somebody or other. And the men shouted the name along. But there was one oldish man with a look of one of Bairnsfather's folk on his face, clinging to a post in the muddy wall of the hole he stood in. A man near him said, "Can't you shout? Don't you 'ear?" And with a snarl he replied, "I'm fed-up shoutin'. And I'm fed-up 'earin'. So there."

I have had one or two nasty moments in my life, but I think that was as nasty as any. And there can be no chill worse than the chill of that dripping mud soaking to your heart in a ruined hillside somewhere in France. It is strange what passes through your thought then. Of course, every kind of serious and grave remembrances, and prayer. Yet also I recall how it struck me as a good thing that I had paid my bills on my last leave home!

I was not present when the boys came out after enduring that kind of thing for three or four days. It was in the dark they came, and many of them stuck as I stuck, and had to be dug out, while some took off their kilts and stepped out in their shirts. A doctor told me what a weird spectacle they made. As shells fell to right or left, or behind them, they bowed forward or sideways to escape them. He said it reminded him, as flash after flash illumined them, of nothing so much as a host of Mohammedans at prayer in a mosque. It must have been like a scene in Dante's *Inferno*. It was indeed like a bit of the hinterland of hell. There is not, and I pray there never may again be, any place like that.

It has made the men who have only seen it so, disbelieve in the legend of "sunny France." I often, just for fun, asked fellows whether it would not be fine, after the war, to fetch our friends across and take them for a run through France on a holiday tour. But they would always hold up their hands and cry, "No, no. I'll never set foot on France again if once I get out of it. I'd rather tramp to Jericho for change of air." I remember sitting outside a café in a small town with a young officer, on whose breast was the ribbon of the Victoria Cross. He was one of the "Die Hards," and the word "Albuera" on his cap badge reminded us of that regiment's deathless glory. It was a very sweet, quiet evening, and our hearts were away beyond the tall trees, thinking long thoughts. And he said, "I wish we could have more of this sweet quiet. I hate the thought of those unsleeping guns when I am here. Do you know—if I ever get back home to England I'll never go to an open-air picnic—I'll never drink tea on the lawn —I'll never go out in the rain—I'll never sleep in anything but the snuggest of feather beds. And certainly I'll never taste stew again, if I can help it, till I die. Mud, the

dug-outs, the trench cookery, and the rain have made me loathe the very thought of all these things." They also make home more precious. As one said, "I was quite glad coming back from leave, till I saw those ships passing us homeward bound. They turned my heart with them over the water."

One evening, leaning against the wall of a trench, a Scottish officer said to me, "I can't help thinking what it's like at home, when I look at that rising moon above the misty river. The harvest is gathered in, and the last carts are just coming up the loan, between the hedges. I can hear the men speaking, and the girls and women laughing together. Why, I can smell my own tobacco, as I smoke at the door, looking out into the gloaming. Man, war is surely a daft-like thing. Just to think that it brings you and me, respectable men, who have never done harm to anybody, into this rat-run, and that there are two or three respectable enough men from near Berlin or somewhere in Germany, over yonder, in the moonlight, that never looked on our faces, and yet they'd go happy to their beds this night if they could put a bullet in the brain of either of us."

We have a very miscellaneous set of fellows—men from the lumber lands, men from the tropics, men from the far-off northern wastes, men who have exchanged college rostrum and divinity school for the mud and the gun-pit. And their old interests colour their present spheres wonderfully. Many a chat I have had with one who, full of truest poetic sympathy, carried his well-thumbed Keats in his pocket and the spirit of it in his heart. And sometimes, on unexpected topics, a controversy would spring up suddenly, like a blast down a Scottish glen. One day, after a hot time, in a tight corner, two officers got into the midst of an argument on a peculiarly Scottish theme. One was an enthusiast, all aflame; the other a bilious, grim-visaged antagonist of the national poet's fame. "Humph!" he snorted, "Burns? Who could stand him? A man without the slightest element of ordinary morality." But the other cried aloud, breaking into his native Doric, "Hoot, man, ye dinna test literature by cauld morality. Gin ye did, whaur's your Psalms o' Dauvid? Weel I wite, Bathsheba would set them tapsalteerie in twa minutes. Gin literature's only to be read and valued if written by the

absolutely perfect, your 'Golden Treasury' would be a very sma' book."

And yet the Scot is never without a very powerful sense of the fitness of things. I had a servant who could be merry as a lark, whistling while he worked, but he appreciated the gravity of his position as a Padre's servant, for on Sundays it was always the most solemn Psalm tunes that he whistled. On other days he had a kind of ritual, always beginning the preparation of breakfast by alternately singing and whistling the hymn, *"Now the day is over."*

Verily, the interest of our multicoloured army is continuously inexhaustible.

THE LARK IN THE SKY

In the mire of the Valley of Shadow,
The shadow of pain,
We stood in the wearisome trenches,
The terrible trenches,
In battle's red rain.

The heavens were watchful above us;
Within us was gloom,
For the rifles rasped hideous laughter,
Hell's horrible laughter,
The laughter of doom.

But sudden our hearts leapt within us,
And woke with a cry;
For a marvel dropt down from the cloudland,
Like a star from the cloudland—
'Twas a lark in the sky.

Our souls sought the hills and the meadows
Afar o'er the foam;
As through mist we beheld the long ridges,
The green and grey ridges,
The dear fields of home.

And we babbled old words in our longing,
And our lips tried to pray—
"O God, bring us safe to the homeland,
To the hearts in the homeland
We love far away."

And we saw, as in dream, the dear faces,
As in moments gone by;
Then we turned us again to our vigil,
Made strong for our vigil
By that lark in the sky!

L. McL. W.

XI

LINKS WITH HOME

Though we were not without our times of yearning, being of course very humanly Scottish, yet there were some things that uplifted us, in the land of war, and gave us strength to be patient and hopeful, linking us with home. One of these was the meeting of boys we knew, on their way off to "somewhere in France."

One day early in the war I heard of the presence of some kilted lads up in one of the camps, new arrivals, whose advent had missed our notice, and who were going off next day. So I motored up, and made for the Y.M.C.A. hut. There are over seven hundred lads away from my own church, so I was not astonished that the first man I ran against at the doorway was one of my own Bible Class at home. Inside, there were more of them, from the Choir, the Bible Class, the Guild, and the Parish, all looking hardy and fit, glowing in the very

best manliness. We might have been in the King's Park at Edinburgh, instead of in a camp in France, resting for a night, ere departure for the fighting line. We had a Scottish "Singsong" that time, the Welsh, English, and Irish present standing aside for their Scottish brethren. Next morning at six o'clock I was on my way to the camp, and marched down behind the pipes, along to the station, and saw them off. My heart went with them, but I had to go away back and comfort and strengthen some of the many pouring in continually to take their places in the line of battle also.

Another episode that linked me on to home came into my experience, when one morning early I heard the bagpipes in the great boulevard off the street in which I was living. How much that means to the Highland heart! In a flash I saw the gleam of Hebridean seas, and the peaks of Skye dreaming in the starlight. I rushed to the window, but the music stopped. It was the march of the Camerons the pipers had been playing. In a few minutes, however, on they came again, the brave lads of the tartan. So I leaned out with my pipes and played the march of the Camerons to them

till the last man went by. How they cheered, and waved their bonnets as they went, glad to be welcomed in a strange land by the strains they knew. Later, that day, at the Camp, an Inverness Captain whom I knew said, "The French *are* very decent. Do you know, when we came in this morning, our pipers stopped, and what do you think? Out stepped a little black Frenchman in his pyjamas onto the balcony of his window, and the beggar played us our march on the bagpipes till the last man went by. Wasn't it decent of him?"

Then, again, came the Gordons, a whole big battalion of them, men to be proud of, broad-bosomed men, clear-eyed, lithe and large of limb. It was a joy to talk to them. There was a University Company amongst them, and one man had, folded up in his sporran, a copy of Delitzsch's edition of the Psalms in Hebrew, to read in the train and the trenches! That was a typically Scottish touch. You cannot get away, even today, from John Knox's dream of a school in every Scottish parish.

Another very striking link was, when one day, after a short service in a shed, with an English regiment going to the Front, I

turned and found one of my own elders of St. Stephen's, Edinburgh, standing by my side. We waited, and watched the men marching out. It was a very moving thought that these were ready to give what was dearest to them for our sakes. I wish the people at home could see how bravely and unblenchingly their lads move on to the superlative sacrifice. Will they ever be forgotten? What can ever repay them for what they suffer and achieve?

But there are other things also worth the telling. I went, not long since, to a grey camp on the slope of a hill, miry, cold, and cheerless. A keen wind piercingly filled each nook and cranny with invincible and unavoidable discomfort. The men, mud-covered, and blue with cold, their shoulders hunched up in the endeavour to find warmth under their khaki overcoats, were moving about aimlessly. The sentry, stamping his feet, was yearning for the hour of relief that seemed scarcely even to crawl towards him through the sodden clay. Not a spot was there into which the chill wind could not penetrate—not a corner around which it did not whirl to find the victim of its torment.

The hut which I was visiting was as cheerless as could be. The air hung like a wet sheet, for coldness, in it. The boards were loose-fitting, the floor sagging on the mud—a poor hut, poorly built, and draughty. But that night, for an hour before the doors are thrown open, there would be a long line outside, standing in the mire, shivering; and then, with a rush, men from every country of the home-land would fill the place, till it steamed with perspiring humanity, and the atmosphere would be thick with the acrid smoke of *Woodbine* cigarettes. These are the soldier's stand-by, friend, and comforter. Give him a *Woodbine* in his teeth, and he will endure with scarce a groan the weary aching jolt of the ambulance train carrying him down from the front; or when, as in the beginning sometimes without an anæsthetic, some terrible ordeal had to be faced immediately, he would grip the little "fag" tight, and, clutching the edge of the table, face the very worst at the surgeon's hands. The *Woodbine* is his constant anodyne in war's sore agony. Surely, better stuff never grappled with pain and death anywhere!

Just as I was about to pass on to another

place, a couple of men of the Black Watch came round the corner. They were tough little fellows of the Ghurka build, Highland in every line and limb. They touched their bonnets and said,

"We're going off to the Front to-night, sir. And we thought we'd like to have the Sacrament before we go. Can you give it to us?"

"How many?" I asked.

"Oh, maybe sixteen," was the reply.

"Well," I answered, "at six o'clock, in the shed next to this one, be present, with your friends."

Off went the two, with a deepened light in their faces, while I prepared the place that was to be for some of them truly the room of the Last Supper. A tablecloth, borrowed from the mess, and a little wine from the same source, helped out our preparations. A notice on the door that the place was closed for ordinary use until the Communion Service was over, did not keep us free from interruption, for the room was the ordinary one for the soldiers' "Sing-song," and men would come and beat upon the doors, and clamour for admission, not reading notices, nor at first understanding.

There was a very special reason why I welcomed the experience. For, some years ago, in my first Parish, I realized how many, laid aside by sickness or old age, were unable to share in that service which is so precious to our Scottish folk. And I used to go on each Communion Sunday into the little homes in the lanes, or away across the moors, to some quiet bothy, carrying the sacred symbols of divine brotherhood, and so linking the lonely on to the wider community, setting the solitary in families. And the Girls' Class of St. Stephen's had heard of it, and given me a chaste little set of Communion vessels for the purpose. And now these were to receive a very deep consecration. They were to be brought into living touch with the sacrifice of the bravest of our manhood, in this the greatest conflict of opposing ideals which the world has ever seen.

The men began to gather, and sat down there as reverently as though the dim draughty hut were the chancel of some great cathedral, holy with the deepest memories of Christian generations. "You might wait," whispered one. "Some of the Camerons and Seaforths may be able to

come." So we waited—a hushed and solemn band. Then quietly, some of them began to croon old psalm memories, and hymns, waiting. And, after a while, the others came, stepping softly into the place; and with them comrades who explained that, though they were of a different country and a different church belief, they yet desired to share in the act of worship preparatory to celebration. At length about one hundred and twenty men were there, and we began. It was the Twenty-third Psalm, the Psalm of God's shepherding, the comradeship of the Divine in the Valley of the Shadow, the faith and the hope of the brave.

> "Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
> Yet will I fear none ill,
> For Thou art with me."

What a power was in it—what a spell of wonder, of comforting and uplifting in this land of war! They sang it very tenderly, for it spoke to them of times when they had held their mothers' hands, and looked up in their faces, in the church at home, wondering why tears were there, as the dear old hearts remembered. Some of them also—the tears were on their cheeks as they sang

that old psalm, very precious in the homeland, very precious here; and it is a soul-shaking thing to see a strong man's tears. It was surely thus our fathers sang, in quiet places, and by foreign streams, when to be true to the faith committed to them meant outcasting, exile, and death.

It means a big thing still, to-day, for our world, this heart-deep singing of our soldier men. I had never dreamed that I should see such depths of feeling for eternal things. Do not tell me this is Armageddon. It is not the end of things. It is Resurrection and Pentecost we are passing through. A harvest is being sown in France of which the reaping shall be world-wide. There will be angels at that ingathering.

It only needed the simplest words to seal that Sacrament. And next morning, in the grey light, the men who had been touched by the thought of home and the dear ones there, and the big throbbing thought of consecration, were marching off to grip the very hand of death, in sacrifice, like Christ's, for others.

I shall never see such wonder of faith again. It is a consecrated memory—the gloomy hut, in the silent camp, the strong

men bowed and weeping under the urgent influence of the spirit of God.

Only a night or two later, we had another link with higher things. It was in a tent, a big marquee, where the Y.M.C.A. was busy selling tea and coffee as we entered.

"We are going off to-morrow," said a fine lad from Cheshire. "Give us Communion, that we may remember when we go, that high ideals call us."

It was a difficult thing, just for a moment, to decide whether it should be held in that tent where men were noisily eating and drinking at the counter, or in some quiet place apart. Instinctively I said, "Yes. Here." So a rude communion-table was made, of boxes heaped together, as our fathers set up altar stones in the moors of old. We laid upon that table covered with a white linen cloth, the little chalice of silver, with the flagon of red wine, and the bread upon its platter, expecting eight men to partake. But the tent filled and hushed, and filled to overflowing; and, even outside, men stood and peered in through the seams. Men raised their drooping heads and stretched out their hands for the sacred symbols.

Away up in the trenches, and about the region of La Bassee, red blood, as red as Christ's, was enriching the soil of France; and the hearts that were beating here might soon be still, in the long graves yonder. A breath of mystery seemed to sway them in that tent; and still that quiet urgency for more came up, until over three hundred men, whose faces to-morrow would be set towards the battle, had partaken of the Sacrament of Sacrifice that linked us to God and our homes across the sea.

I cannot forget the little orderly who helped me. He was hardly more than a boy, but he was going off with the others, where death would run after him, and death's chances jostle him; and the thought lifted him suddenly into big manhood with the rest.

"Will you give it to me, sir, too?" he asked. And I gave him the bread, but in the storm of my feelings I for a moment forgot to give him the wine when the cup came back at last. Suddenly, as the men were singing, I remembered, and turning round held it out to him. I see him yet, drawing himself up to attention. He put his hand to his cap, as he would honour his

earthly king, and saluted ere he took the symbol of the blood of the King of Love. These are things of eternal moment, unforgettable, in hours when life looked in at one window and saw death looking in at the other.

Talk of our churches, our sects, our quarrelsome divisions! When men are face to face with the Eternal as we were out there, these things are as forgotten as the dust that blew last year, over the remotest sand-heap, into the Atlantic. Brotherhood in the divine uplifting of a great imperial call, and the love of a uniting Christship binds, as with a golden girdle, all our hopes, our faiths, and our fears, and links them to the Highest.

These were children of sacrifice. The light of God was on their faces. To-day the dust of Belgium and France may be mingling with their dust. But the grass will grow along the fields of conflict, and new hopes will spring in the ruined land of Belgium, where these lie sleeping.

XII

A RUINED WORLD

It is impossible for the people at home to imagine the effect of war upon a country. What were beautiful rural retreats are now smashed and scarred out of recognition. A heap of dusty bricks marks where a village stood only recently; a broken wall is all that is left of a fine old church, which was encrusted by most sacred memories; a few stunted spars, splintered and blackened, shew where once was a forest of shimmering greenery fit for the haunt of fairies. Where was a country road, down which were wont to come the laden carts in harvest-time, is a miry track, torn by shell-holes, powdered and crunched into clinging mud-paste by the ambulances, the motor lorries, the transport limbers, and the long lines of jaded, soaked, earth-stained men continually on the move along it.

All over the hillside, once beautiful in the sunshine, with waving corn, and woodlands

where the birds were singing, run the intricate mazes of forsaken trenches, broken and ploughed by the terrible artillery, gaping with the huge craters of exploded mines, wrinkled and scarred, seared and blighted as if with some horrid leprosy. It is strewn with graves. It is a land that bears the story of its torture in every feature. And the fruitful soil has been buried deep under stones and chalk refuse. It is an emaciated thing, like a blind beggar, the very bones projecting through its rotting skin. It is not like a bit of God's fair earth at all, but rather some kind of underworld, away from hope and laughter. And it was only so recently beautiful among the nations, and the pride of the people whom it bore.

All over those ruined fields battle upon battle has swung in passionate struggle to and fro. For the enemy had laid down, with consummate thought and masterly design, what he intended to be an absolutely impregnable frontier line of earth-fort, strong dug-out, and powerful trench. And you would understand, as he has been made to understand, as never before, the stuff of which our race is made, if you saw the kind

of place from which our boys drove out the stiffest and most stubborn foe we ever had to face.

The dug-outs which have been left undamaged ought to be preserved for all the world to see, as monuments alike of determined and purposeful industry, and of invincible courage and sacrifice. Some of them are two and three storeys in depth. You go down stairs that are wood-lined all the way with great strong beams; you can go along from passage to passage, looking into rooms comfortable, dry, and ventilated, furnished with many a titbit shifted from the homes which the guns have now blown flat—big, fine French beds, cosy arm-chairs, gilt-framed mirrors that once were in drawing-rooms, sumptuous rugs, warm curtains, stoves, and electric light. The men who occupied these never expected to be moved. Deep down there they could sit secure from bomb and shell, the explosions of which sounded far away. There, in safety from our unspeakably terrible bombardments, the Germans crowded together and lay low, and then, rushing up, brought their machine-guns to bear on our advancing lines. But yet,

despite it all, the lads from our firesides at home and oversea stormed the stern citadels, snatched the strong shelters from the grip of the enemy, and with bayonet and fist forced the dismayed and astonished Huns into death or surrender. They are the true monuments and mementoes of our army's devotion. The heart swells with a pride that has tears behind it, beholding the strength which was overcome, and remembering the sacrifice willingly given, in the strenuous hour of honour's call, by those of our flesh and blood. God grant we may be worthy of them in the days that are to be!

The very human instinct which makes people write their names upon the Pyramids, and in holier places, leaves its trace in the dug-outs also. On the lintels and jambs, in indelible pencil, is written name upon name; sometimes the legend, *"Gott mit uns"*; a stanza of Luther's hymn, *"Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott"*; or a verse or two of some old folk-ballad. At the door of one of these strongholds, on the ridge of a slope overlooking a once beautiful valley, I found a verse of warmest sentiment, inspired by the thought of a girl far

away, and by the vision of the red, round, moon in the hazy sky. Some Saxon lover's heart was for a while uplifted from the grim environment of war by the magic of remembrance, while the vast solemnity of moonlight flooded that place of death and doom and dire destruction. On at least one of the dug-outs a desire for strict privacy had prompted the occupants to inscribe upon the lintel the notice, *"Durchgang verboten"* ("No admission"). They forgot to put up "except on business," so our brave Tommies went right in without knocking and took possession.

Some of the mine-craters are awe-inspiring, huge and monstrous evidences of the reality of war, scarified traces of terrible sacrifice. I saw one which must be about fifty yards in diameter and nearly fifty feet deep. The chalk soil and gravel glistened in the sun. And it reminded me of nothing so much as the photographs of mountains in the moon which were in our manuals of astronomy at college. Right down at the centre of it was a little cross; and here and there along the sloping sides the marks of brave dust's sleeping-places, with remains of

German uniforms scattered about. Not far from the edge of it stands a big, simple white cross inscribed, "Here lie buried the gallant men of the ——th Division, killed 1st July 1916." Then follow the names of some well-known regiments, including one of our own local battalions. Everywhere in No Man's Land, the scene of conflict on that memorable day, where, among the rough grasses and thorns, the broken and rusting barbed wire caught your foot, are to be found memorials of the fallen. There is a touch of extreme pathos in some of the distinctive marks, as, for example, the weather-worn broad bonnet of a Scottish regiment, the ordinary regulation cap, a trench helmet or two with the hole made by the bullet which was the sudden messenger of death. These, placed on the top of the little, rude wooden crosses, shewed where had been found unknown and unidentified dead. The piteousness of the lost, who fell without a message, strikes you there.

I remember another mine-crater, in another place, where the graves were for the most part those of French soldiers who had been laid to rest by the hands of those who knew them not. There was a slab about

the centre to the memory of *"Plusieurs inconnus soldats français morts au champ d'honneur."* To one cross was affixed a letter from the little daughter of the man whose stricken body slept below. It had been found in his pocket, stained and creased, but kept as a tender souvenir of home. It was addressed, *"A mon père à la guerre."* It spoke to us, beholding it, of a young heart, somewhere, with the first touch of the mystery of death and the enigma of the empty chair cold upon it.

The stillness of those places, so lately swept by the overwhelming thunders of doom, was beyond description. And Nature's exquisite poesy had intervened; for, along the forsaken trenches, and near the graves, the drowsy scarlet poppy was waving in the silent garden of sleep. And sometimes it was as though war's destructive hand, rending the clay, had loosened the slumbering seeds of countless wild flowers, and given them their chance to hide the scars which the wrath of man had made on the face of the world.

We sat on a ridge there for a little while, and looked down on the battered village below, and the wood beyond, where such

a dire struggle had so recently marked the dawn of a summer day; and the tragedy of it all came close in beside us, keeping us silent as those whose grave-mounds were scattered in the green plots near. Just in front of us was the grave of a German officer; the silver-grey moth which was creeping up his broken cross seemed to take a sudden meaning in that quiet place. And across the valley we could see the long line of men in khaki winding over the hill, horizonwards, through a ruined land.

As one moves from place to place one cannot but ask what is to be the fate of those shattered places, where happy folks once dwelt together, and of which, save for some heaps of brick-dust and a few spars, scarce a vestige now remains? Will they be rebuilt? I fancy, however poor the ruins are to-day, sentiment will bring back the scattered people to the old sites, that still in their desolateness are dear to the memory of those whose homes were there. For a long time after the war there will be villages of huts, for I have heard a whisper that the wooden buildings in our encampments may be purchased by the French Government for this very purpose. But

it is at present difficult to conceive a set of settled communities in these valleys and fields of death. And yet every day one has seen how the people cling to the land. Shells may fall with nerve-shaking insistency, but the peasant will go on with his ploughing or his harrowing, turning a deaf ear to the threat of war. And the industry of the French nation has in the past wrought wonders when the cloud of war has removed its threat from their country.

Their thrift is historic. They are much given to hiding their hoard under the floor or in their gardens ere they flee. In one place in the Ancre region a man came with permission to search for his money where he had secreted it. He was led out to the place, where every trace of the village had been obliterated by countless shells, where shell-hole upon shell-hole made desolation of vineyard and garden. On a little narrow ridge between two great pits he found a stump which he thought was what was left of the bush that had been his landmark, and digging there he found his treasure. A few inches on either side and his lifelong savings would have been scattered beyond recovery. He almost fell upon the ground

for gratitude over the issue of his search. It made one think of what it all must mean to countless others who are not so fortunate.

Perhaps as terrible as crumbled ruins is the deserted village, where the houses still are standing, though at intervals along the street some have had their roofs blown in or the front walls shattered, and the church has been pierced by shells. I remember the first of these through which I rode in the dark. The empty, windowless rooms sent back the beat of our horses' feet most eerily, and we hushed our voices to a whisper as we rode. A large convent loomed by the roadside, empty and dark. And one felt something like the shadow of some great despair behind those forsaken walls. By daylight it was just as eerie. And you saw what wreckage war had made. At one door, in the passage, a cradle had been left behind. The people had apparently been in flight when a shell had dropped in the street, and they had fled precipitately then for dear life. The church precincts and the convent garden had been thoroughly searched by artillery, shell-hole lying in almost immediate contact with

shell-hole. There was not a sign of life anywhere, except a stray cat or two which still lingered about the familiar places, and the chirp of the sparrows which thronged the bushes about the silent convent. In a corner of the garden there, a little gathering of plain white wooden crosses told where the tired ones were sleeping till the Great Awakening. In that place I have spoken of the Resurrection and the Life above the sleepers, in the sunshine and the rain.

Almost as pathetic as the deserted village is the half-forsaken town, where, because the German guns drop their "crumps" there daily, most of the population have shut their doors and fled. I was often in one such, where before the war probably almost twenty thousand people led a busily industrious life. In the thoroughfare which bears the French equivalent of "Commercial Street" the grass was growing thick. Everywhere windows had been blown in, and high roofs broken like matchwood. The beautiful old square was silent, the green grass flourishing between the paving-stones, and scarcely a footfall disturbed its slumber. But one day my servant said, "Ride round this way, sir. There's some-

thing here that touched my heart yesterday." So we turned into a side-street of working folks' houses. And there were bairns laughing in their games, forgetful of the ruin and desolation. John stopped his horse, and his voice was husky as he said, "There's something in the Scriptures about a thing like this; a promise that in ruined Jerusalem there shall be children playing in the streets again. I found this here yesterday, and it minded me o' that."

As sad as anything is the old château in the pleasant, wood-environed meadow, like a lamed and wounded thing, with ancient names on the marble slabs in the vaults, and the gilding still on the drawing-room, though sorely tarnished by the rain and the fog that have had too free entry through the dilapidated ceiling. I was sitting in one like that, chatting with some doctors who had made it their headquarters, when suddenly three shells fell in the wood close by, and rocked the old place like a cradle. Somebody just said, "Hullo!" and then we went on with the conversation. On the floor of the drawing-room, quite near us, lay an ugly lump of iron which had come in the day previous, through a panel of

the drawing-room door, from a similar experience.

You do not need to go up to the front-line trench for risky moments. The messages of Brother Fritz are delivered unpleasantly far back, and when least expected. I have heard them falling quite near us when we thought ourselves in a really secure billet. And one day, just across a field from where I stood, I saw one burst in a threadbare bit of wood, amongst some men who little looked for such a missive. It was strange to see the sudden alarm, and how the poor fellows ran hither and thither seeking cover, some of them vainly, from their horrid visitor.

All these places had names of their own before the war. They will, of course, have them still when war is over. They will keep the broken remembrance of them somehow, as a maimed brain keeps the memory of its past. But the British soldier has baptized them all by odd terms, making wild, grabbing attempts after the real thing, with the oddest and yet frequently most eloquent meanings as result. When one reflects on his experience in certain neighbourhoods, could anything

be more appropriate than Armytears, or Devil's Wood, or Business, or Eatables, for certain well-known spheres of strenuous and painful activity? The trenches get their own names too. You find your way by Paternoster Row out to Ailsa Craig, so called from its remoteness and isolation; and you must be careful going through Na Poo Avenue, for it can be enfiladed by the enemy snipers, and many a brave fellow has been "na poo" there. It is the soldier's familiar equivalent for the French phrase which expresses the fact that anything has come to an end, that there is no more of it; but it is in reality a patois synonym for the French classical sentence. And sometimes you stumble upon more familiar ground. One day I had to stoop in going underneath an overhead obstacle in a trench; and as I rose too suddenly I received a very sharp blow, which might have stunned me but for my good steel helmet's protection. As I looked up I found that I had just passed through Gibb's Entry. Surely it was an Edinburgh lad from Nicolson Street, where that familiar alley is to be found, that wrote the name there.

In this ruined land the presence of winter

gives us all serious thought. It is a horrible thing to contemplate. A few days' rain, and you will in some places have three feet of muddy, chill water to waddle through. And farther on, where the great guns have battered the world into smashed pulp of mire, you may go up to the waist, and indeed plunge into death itself, in loathsome mud. Nothing can be drearier, more dismal, or more grim than the winter landscape there—black slime of clammy clay, with water-filled shell-holes, stretching to a dull grey horizon-line. The camp where the transport lies is a quag, where mud-covered horses and men shiver by day and night. And the line is a series of deadly holes, where the faithful hold their posts in hideous discomfort, under an intermittent fire of shells which splash into the mire, flinging up first of all dirt and stones around them, and then, with a roaring burst, showers of missiles and fragments of iron, with the red fiery thing of hate in the heart of them. And that is the discipline through which our boys pass, without despondency, till the time for advance comes again, and we go forward once more along the path of inevitable sacrifice to victory.

XIII

YPRES

On my return from leave I was transferred from the Gordons to the Black Watch. I got rather a start when an officer at the Base, on 28th February, gave me a movement order instructing me to leave for the front on the *29th* of that month. As this meant that I should have to wait in Boulogne till the year 1920, I got him to alter the date to the 1st of March, and so I left the next day.

What a joy the advent of Spring brings to us in this land of sorrow. It had been one long dreary winter-time of alternating discomforts, a world of universal mire.

I remember a friend of mine being brought down from Beaumont-Hamel into a Field Ambulance when I was lying there. He was one of the finest types of Northern Englishmen that I have ever known, brave in the field and trench, bright on the march and in the camp. He was dripping with

mud from head to heel, and doubled up with excruciating rheumatism. A man on the adjacent stretcher asked him what it was like where he had come from, and he replied, "It is cold hell." That was our Celtic idea of the place of torment—*Ifrinn fuar,* a place of chill from which there can be no escape, of dripping mist and rain from which there is no shelter. Nothing could more aptly describe the heart of winter in the broken trench-holes from which our artillery had expelled the Germans, and which we had to occupy and hold, but out of which a constant stream of sick and crippled men passed down the line through our hospitals.

The dug-outs in that district, after a forward driving movement, held the story in vivid lines of pain, as if in suspense. In one, of the usual kind, a man was sitting dead at the top of the stair, his head reclining against the wall, his eyes closed as though sleeping, and five bayonet wounds in his breast. At the foot of the stair lay another, who had been flung down headlong. In the bed lay a British sergeant, shot through the abdomen, his pipe fallen aside, after his last smoke, just before he

had died. Under the bed lay two German officers, dead, with their boots off.

Not far off, up on the bleak and dismal slope were two great tanks, which had stuck in the mud, and around them lay the men, our own and the enemy, who would never fight again.

One of our young officers missed his way in the dark, up there, and wandered off, lost. Afraid lest he should stumble into the German lines, the locality of which was meanwhile quite uncertain, he took shelter in a dug-out. But he could not stay there. It was full of German dead, some sprawling on the floor, some sitting up against the wall, or in the corners. He flashed his torch around his fellow-tenants once, and once only. "Their eyes," said he, "were hauntingly blue. They stared at me as if questioning my intrusion. In the darkness, something stirred. I felt that they were going to leap at me," he said, "and I could quite understand one's reason wavering for a moment." So out he went again, to seek his way. But, hearing strange voices near, he hid in a shell-hole, with his revolver ready. The voices approached and passed. And then, tired out, he fell asleep. When

he woke, chilled to the bone, he found that his revolver had dropped into the mud and disappeared. He had to get along, and keep moving. And then suddenly he heard two English Tommies grumbling somewhere ahead, loudly, about the quality of their bully beef. "I could have kissed them!" he exclaimed. "It was heavenly to hear them cursing." And indeed there can be nothing sweeter to the ear in such circumstances than to hear an old camp grouser luridly describing his luck. You may be certain then that you have come across as staunch a bit of manhood as can be found in any army anywhere, and in his best form.

The artillery activity down there was practically continuous. It woke you through the dark, like the frantic thunder of some mad tom-tom player, with the "Ha-ha-ha!" of the hellish laughter of the machine-guns for chorus.

I remember seeing my new regiment land in France early in 1915 as two battalions. Their broken ranks had been replenished and broken again and again till now they were combined as one battalion, though it needed a large draft from another regiment to make up even that. Amongst them

were some men of my first parish in Aberdeenshire, so that there was a curiously human link with the Gordons still.

We were up in the famous Salient of Ypres, where I had formerly been for a little while in 1916, but it was only now that I got my first acquaintance with that town itself. It was on a Saturday afternoon, and at the entrance to the town I overtook a man of the Black Watch, who, recognizing the red heckle in the bonnet tucked in at my belt, became very friendly. He said he would lead me to the Barracks, where my people were. But it was soon quite apparent that he did not know the way, and that he was not of our battalion. First he led me to the Square, only to be turned back by the military policeman; for the Square is shelled daily, and nobody is allowed to pass through it. Only the policeman, another of the forgotten brave ones, stands there for the protection of others. My guide pointed to the fragments of the famous Cathedral, and he said, "That maun hae been a vera fine Catholic chaipel. I never saw sae mony braw chaipels onywhere. Of coorse they're a' chaipel folk in this country, but

they maun be gey supersteeshous to hae sae mony kirks." After wandering about for a while he had to admit that he had led me astray. "But just you gang doon this close," said he, pointing along a ruined alley, "and speer at the first body you meet. They're bound to ken. Oh ay—the Berracks is a well-kent place!" pawkily covering up his own ignorance by his assurance of the intelligence of others.

In a cellar, protected with sand-bags, I found the Y.M.C.A., and soon was at my destination.

I never saw, and hope never to see again, another such town. Before the war it was a prosperous place of about twenty thousand people. Its Cathedral, as everybody knows, was one of the notable churches of the Low Countries, and the magnificent Hall of its Cloth Guild one of the famous glories of the Middle Ages. But one day in April 1915, while citizens and soldiers were walking about in the crowded Square, and the streets were full, a torrent of shell poured over the place, and in a few minutes the Square was a bloody shambles of dying men, women, and children, while crowds ran in screaming distraction, trying

to escape from the horrible death that pursued them everywhere. Hundreds took refuge in the cellars, but the houses toppled in upon them and crushed them. There is not now a living creature there, except our soldiers. Desolation like the desolation of a town over which has swept the tornado of volcanic destruction is everywhere. The Cloth Hall is a heap of broken stone. The Cathedral lies like a shipwreck, with its bare ribs open to the weather. As you walk through the forsaken streets you hear the whistle and groan of a shell go overhead, and the crash falls just a house or two away from you in an adjacent lane. It is like a town blighted by a curse—a place of fear in the sunlight, and a haunt of ghosts and devils in the dark. It is a place that you hold your breath in, often. Your heart quickens as you enter it; and you breathe freely when you leave it.

Next day I had to hold a service at a windmill, where a Casualty Clearing Station was established. And then I was to go back to Ypres for a service in the Barracks there. The old mill had been dismantled. The story was that it had belonged to the Maire of the village near by; but it had been

observed that even when there was no wind blowing, the sails would move. And it was proved conclusively that those great arms, seen far and wide, were being used for signalling to the enemy. That finished the Maire's interest in worldly affairs for ever, and the mill was fitted up for nobler uses. Immediately after my service I went through the street of shattered houses, past the Church, where only a fragment of the tower is standing, all a-topple, with the shell-broken grave-stones around it, on to the cross roads. And there before me lay the white-paved road to Ypres.

There are trees still standing on either side of it, though many of them are split and broken. And the fields through which it runs bear countless traces of bombardment, water-filled shell-holes innumerable telling of the attentions of the enemy. Not a soul was to be seen upon it. And everything was silent as the grave. It was like a road leading into another world. Horsemen and wheeled traffic, except for an occasional emergency waggon, or a general's car, are forbidden in daylight beyond those cross roads.

I had not gone far along it when my attention was arrested by the quick sound of Lewis guns firing away up overhead. And I stood and saw two aeroplanes fighting for life against several others which pursued them, darting after them like hawks, whenever they tried to escape. And at length one of the two, disabled, dropped from cloudland swinging to and fro, till it fell like a stone. The other kept up a plucky fight, but it, too, at a great height, was riddled and fell also. The pilot fell out of it—a little speck like a fly. He seemed to pause for a moment and then dropped after his machine. Somehow I thought these were enemy planes as I could not see their markings, and I cheered where I stood. But shortly afterwards I met a man resting by the wayside, and he told me they were two of ours. I never afterwards cheered again till I was sure.

A little farther on a couple of shells came screaming over, and fell in the field beside the road, disturbing some men who had evidently been in some dug-out shelter, for they squattered away like ducks, to another security, and I never saw them

again. It makes you think very quickly for a little, asking yourself which way lies safety—on this side or the other; till you suddenly remember that the way of duty lies straight on, and you are probably as safe in the middle as anywhere else.

My service was in a cellar in the Barracks, a dim dull chamber with an arched roof. The place was packed. Just as my service began, a big gun next door shook the place, and the flash lit up the room. I saw the gleam in the eyes of my congregation, and everybody irresistibly ducked, for it was as though a shell had landed beside us. It was a sight not easily forgotten.

Later on, in Ypres, as I came in to have a service on a pleasant Sunday morning, we had a very startling opening voluntary. A German shell struck a corner of the Barrack Square, killing one and severely wounding five of my congregation. It was a tense moment. But we went over to another corner. I told the men the service was for those who wished it, and a little band followed me. We read together the 91st Psalm, joined in prayer, and then I spoke a few

words on the lesson which is very specially the soldier's psalm, concentrating on the verse, "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, . . . nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." Fortunately nothing more came over.

I remember also a service on the canal bank at Ypres. The day was full of sweet beauty. I had had a long walk from an early service. But somehow Sunday morning seems the favourite time for shelling. As we passed along, a gun just beside the road sent off a morning greeting to the Germans, and others followed suit. It was very remarkable to hear three or four shells sing their terrible song of death together in flight through the air side by side.

On the canal bank a squad was being drilled in gas-helmet exercise, and they looked the most grotesquely fierce creatures, like things that had crept out of some goblin story, through deep waters, into the light of the sun. Away on the right was the end of Ypres, the grey mouldering ruins projecting like a broken bone. The men sat down on the bank, and we sang *"Oh, God of Bethel,"* and had a short service together. Now and again an occasional shell fell near,

and in between we could hear the cuckoo's call and the larks singing as though anything like war were very far away.

I had to go back for another service, and it was most interesting to see how the Germans had been searching for our guns. Everywhere were shell-holes, and the wonder truly was how they had really missed the mark they sought. For, the day previous, the crash of their artillery had been constant. And there was a curious accompaniment to it. For an English regiment had been bragging a little about its football prowess, they having been invincible in over forty games. Now, in the Black Watch we had some notable footballers who took up the challenge. I question if there ever was a more hotly contested game than that played behind the line. All the while the shells were falling at intervals, not far off; and it was very funny to observe the onlookers shouting "Goal!" or "Foul!" or "Play the game!" and then giving a hasty glance over their shoulders to see where the last shell had dropped. The players themselves were too eager to think of anything but the game, and the Black Watch broke the boasted record all to smash. The red

heckle led again to victory. Of course, as everybody knows, it was given to the regiment as a badge of notable victory, when in 1795 the men of *Am Freiceadan dubh*[1] dragged back from the clutch of the enemy the guns which had been lost, and got given to them for all time, in commemoration of their valour, the scarlet plume of a notable dragoon regiment, through whose wavering these had been taken. Nothing keeps the men fit like a tussle on the football field, and it steadies and trains heart and eye for the sterner game that is waiting for its turn later on.

[1] Gaelic = *The Black Watch.*

XIV

IN THE SALIENT

NOTHING could be more comforting to us than, when the German shells come over, to hear our guns take up the defensive, with a loud "Hands off!" And then a deadly dialogue ensues.

It is wonderful to see how cleverly the sites of our guns are hid from aeroplane observation. You might frequently enough pass the quiet lonely ruined cottage by the wayside, whose shutters seemed to have half dropped from their hinges, but one day you see a canvas screen pulled slightly apart, and the muzzle of a big gun peers out of the shadows at you. Everything seems forsaken, till suddenly you see an officer busy at a telephone, whispering messages to some far-off station. I remember a place where we had heavy guns that shook everybody and everything near, when they were fired; and one day shell upon shell was spent trying to knock these out. We

had imitation gun shelters erected out in fields, and through the screen of painted tarpaulin and twigs a beam of wood protruded, for all the world like the muzzle of a gun. The German aircraft men had seen these, and many a pound of powder had been burned putting the dummies out of action.

Alongside of such practical joke tactics, however, the bitterly grim reality was always claiming its place. One night I noticed a fine stalwart corporal of the guard walking to and fro. I could not help standing still for a long time and watching him. A finer figure in a kilt I never saw. And I thought what a picture he would make at a camp fire, with the dark night all around. Two days later, in the trenches, he stood up straight, and the sniper's bullet caught him. It took our men hours to bring his body down the trench to the graveyard at the farm beyond the Lille Gate. I went thither from Ypres to bury him and another of our fellows, out by Shrapnel Corner. It and Hell-Fire Corner always live up to their names. There had been a hot time there the night before. I picked up an orderly at the Barracks at random, and he turned out to be the nephew of an elder of mine in

my Aberdeenshire parish, twenty years ago. The world is so small to-day. We did not linger at Shrapnel Corner, for the traces of the recent bombardment were only too fresh to recommend delay. Tree stumps had been split and shattered, and the road torn into holes. The trolly track up which we were to have gone on leaving the road had been broken; so we waded through the mud beside it till we reached a sluggish stream that seemed uncertain which way to go. There we had to creep carefully up on to the trolly road, and bolting over, dropped instantly to the ground when we had crossed. And now the enemy began to shell the railway, which ran quite near; and the whistle and scream of missiles were a constant reminder of the danger that is always at hand in that Salient.

I had to wait for some hours at the graveyard till the bodies arrived. And somehow the instinct to get in somewhere under cover of however crazy a shelter prevailed. I have seen us pull the blanket over our heads when the anti-aircraft shell-cases were coming down with a "whoo." In fact I believe that if one had an umbrella with him he would be tempted to put it up. The little

broken shed into which I stepped had been only a kind of barn or byre. There was scarcely anything of it left, and it was open to the sky. But in there lay eight or nine dead men, under their blankets, waiting for the grave. One I remember was a fine and beautiful youth, with his eyes closed as if in gentle sleep; and still upon his cheeks was the pink glow, as though death had only a minute since frozen life's warm stream. I drew the blankets up over their faces, and left them.

The Ypres Salient is an uncomfortable place. It is considered, with good reason, to be "unhealthy." Every wind that blows may be said to blow from the enemy's direction. And the notices always seem to stand at "Dangerous." The last night I was there we had a gas alarm. The camp was sleeping, so first of all we roused the men, and then, with our gas helmets on, stood waiting. The thought of the chance of being smothered by this dreadful invention of modern warfare was most unpleasant. It is the only thing that ever made my knees shake for a little. We heard the hooters go, and the gongs rattle, and then the roaring barrage. But the alarm passed, and the

horror uplifted, though it is not easily forgotten. Odd accidents happen in the Salient. One day our canteen corporal was sitting at the counter, when a shell burst near the hut. He had his hand in his pocket, and when he pulled it out as a piece of shrapnel passed through, he left two of his fingers behind. The thing happened in a moment, and he felt first of all astonished, and then very thankful to have got off so cheaply.

Sometimes you find the shelter you seek only adding inconvenience rather than ease to your lot. Near Ypres stands the Asylum. It was a Hospice of the Sacred Heart. The Hun was busy when I went in there one evening. It is a large place, with beautiful courtyards, and the remains of a fine cloistered walk around. The bombardment had lifted a poor dead soldier out of his grave, and he had to be reinterred. I felt quite relieved when I got away from it.

We were only once, during the three months, out of the Salient, being sent back for a long-promised rest, which was curtailed to two days, after which we were sent up the line again. When we were coming out we passed through little villages and clachans, some of them just clusters of

wooden huts, some mere caravans side by side. From the names above the doors—"New Ypres," "Vlamertinge," and the like—you could see that they were settlements of refugees out of the old terrible days, the broken remnants of a once happy population. Once, as we trudged along, we passed an English regiment resting by the wayside, and out of compliment to the Scots, a soldier was upstanding, playing the strathspey called *Stirling Castle,* on a violin, to us, as we marched. He got a hearty cheer all along the ranks.

It was very delightful to get a real bed for these two days, in an attic above a baker's shop, in a little French village, ere we returned to the Belgian mud. The villagers were much interested in the Scotsmen. And it was fine to them to be awakened every morning at revally, with *Hey, Johnnie Cope, are you waukin' yet?*—to hear the pipes at meal-time playing the old injunction, *O gie my love brose and butter,* and then again at "Lights out" to hear the piper going through the narrow street with the ancient strains of *Donald Gorm.*

Our kilts always struck the villagers as something strange and wild. I remember

in one quiet village on our way down to the Ancre, I was quartered for the night on a very quaint household. Their home was a large house beside the road. It had the appearance of a long-decayed gentility, and it was occupied by two faded old ladies and a shadowy, very ancient man. They seemed to be unable to move from beside the stove, nursing the last remaining dregs of life in its scanty warmth. Two officers, mistaking their billet, came in and tried to set up occupation, but I turned them out, directing them to their own place. The spectres had risen to their feet in fear. And after the intruders had gone, they asked me, tremblingly, whether we were Francs-tireurs. They seemed to think we were wild irregulars, with our mountain garb and our screaming bagpipes.

Our march back to the Salient was through bitter wind and sleet; but I had found a tin whistle in the camp before we had gone out, and as I tramped with the doctor behind the last Company, I kept the lagging feet going, with *Bonnie Dundee, Mrs. Macleod of Raasay,* and many another old march of our Northern people. A Chaplain has to forget his clerical collar and his

Sam Browne belt, and to be lark and linnet, comforter and chum, if he is to be of real living use to the boys.

One never can forget some of the nights up there. I recall the heavens, full of brilliant stars; the new moon clear and beautiful, like a shallow skiff of beaten silver, with the shadow of the earth, like a sorrow, enfolded in its clasp. The foreground dark, except for shining pools in shell-holes, and the gleam of a winding stream that crawled through the camp. Far off, behind a ruined woodland, lingered the dim afterglow. In the distant sky hung an observation balloon, watching for the enemy's gun-flashes. Near us was the solitary grave of a Gordon Highlander, "Corporal Kindness"—a name that spoke to us of the fishing villages along the Moray Firth. The constant traffic of the transport on the *pavé* rumbled up through the dark, mingling with the grumble of the guns. And a solitary piper was playing somewhere in the deepening night. The sentry was silhouetted against the sky, and voices from somewhere near reached us in low murmurings. Loneliness, sorrow, death, and a touch of home, all combined to make up for us a tone-picture of the war. And

as I lay down in my billet in a windowless cellar underneath a stair in an old farmhouse, I listened unsleepingly to the wind wailing like a weeping woman, out over the miry fields in Flanders. Is it a wonder that we often thought of home—of the tall grey houses in our Northern towns, of the villages by the shores, and the cottages in the glens, and the waves breaking softly on the crags in the island that we love, and the hearts, as unsleeping as ourselves, thinking of us there?

The wonderful vitality of Nature in the Land of War gave a most pathetic interest to the shattered environment among which we lived and worked. By the mouth of one dug-out in a nasty trench, was a bower of beautiful roses, a memento of some old garden in the days before the war. The blackbirds nested in the ruined orchards right in the heart of the World of Smash. The house-martin made his home under the tiles that still hang together on a broken roof. The church of Le Bizet is crushed into wreckage, but the sparrows twitter in the ruins. And at the great convent just along the road, where the piety of consecrated womanhood sang hymns and psalms, and

chanted prayers, the little birds flit in and out as though the voice of praise were not to be altogether silenced by the growl of cannon and the crack of shrapnel. Once, at a nasty corner, when for a moment I hesitated to go forward, I felt as though rebuked by a thrush that sat upon a twig by the wayside, and sang of courage and of hope. I have often thought how the lark must wonder at the burst of shrapnel from the anti-aircraft guns, which occasionally invades his province as he sings at heaven's gate, above a war-ruined world.

Another form of life that came in contact with us, and was not beloved by us, was the swarming crowd of rats. I remember one night going down a track in the fields, and trying to pick my way with the help of occasional flashes of a pocket torch. At every flash I saw rats scurrying along the ruts. This will be one of the great problems of the future of Belgium after the war.

The cat and the dog were of course friends and companions, and were looked upon as being in reality of ourselves.

XV

THE BOYS

The work among the wounded is frequently trying beyond human endurance. Many a time I have felt how thankful I should have been for the relief of tears. I remember especially one day when an orderly said to me, "Oh, Padre, this is a sad day in this tent!" That meant far more than the mere words conveyed; there were so many young brave lives there in anguish, maimed and stricken, swept in as though upon a tide of sorrow, from the Valley of the Shadow. And so little could be done. Words were futile. "Hold my hand, Padre," begged one fine fellow, "and I'll try to bear it till the doctor comes around." And it was a hand like flame that he put into mine.

Their patience is perhaps more heartbreaking to look upon than their pain. One, with his leg torn off, said, "I must not complain. You see there are many really worse

off than myself." Once, on a hospital train, where a crowd of helpless men were being loaded up at a siding, I saw one man, groaning in agony from rheumatism, carried in. "Where are you wounded, old chap?" asked the orderly. "Hoots," he replied, "I'm no wounded at a'. Fling me onywhere. Look after the rest."

Sorrow and suffering are verily big angels of God. We are learning, in a mystery. And we shall yet have worse—great sorrow for the nation, and empty firesides for thousands, in this crucifixion hour of the World; and for us, trying to help and uphold, the greater need for the grace of God.

Every day you saw the tragedy of it. I recall a tent in which I was sitting beside a dying bed, and there was a screen up around the next one. The man there had a very severe head wound, and was incessantly talking, as though giving quick orders to fellows near him. Now and again he would lift his clasped hands to his parched lips, and drink feverishly from an invisible water-bottle, resuming thereafter the exhausting trench drama in his dying delirium.

In another tent were two chums from the same town and the same regiment, both

dying. Jack's subconsciousness was busy, going through the fight again which had cost him his life; and, as he would fall back, worn out, he would cry for his chum, "Bill! Come on, Bill! Help! They're in." But poor Bill was passing away at the other end of the tent, utterly unconscious—the tide of life ebbing far out in silence, towards the main ocean, with no returning flood for these shores.

I remember also at this time another, who suddenly slipped hold on life and went over the watershed. And he insisted on sitting up in bed, talking to invisibilities, whom he was showing out somewhere. "Good-bye—thank you!" he kept saying with a wan smile. He looked at you with eyes that seemed to see you, while yet looking through you at the unseen. And his "Good-bye—thank you!" almost broke your heart.

The wounded were always keen on souvenirs, and these were of great variety. The New Testament that had stopped a bullet just above the heart was a frequent one, and perfectly genuine. A South African had been carrying in his Testament a photograph of his sweetheart, and the bullet stopped just in front of her face. It had

made a bruise there, as though she had stepped in between him and death. He had been severely wounded, as it was, already, and the Testament was wrapped up in a bloody rag. He will not let that souvenir lightly go. It is, of course, true that any book would prove as efficient as a life protector; but it is this Book that the soldier prefers to carry there. And more frequently than people think he reads it and carries much of it in his heart also.

The passion for souvenirs sometimes seemed to mean more than the mere craze for collecting. I remember one grim fellow who insisted on having beside him a blood-encrusted German bayonet. I imagine it had a story of its own, with some import to himself. Others would sit dreamily caressing German helmets which they had brought with them from the field.

Sometimes this passion led to curious adventures. A Gordon Highlander had crept out to No Man's Land for souvenirs, and was coming back with a German helmet slung on his shoulder-strap. But he lost his bearings, and encountered two men of the Devons who had been out on some kind of scouting work. He very naturally crouched

down as they approached, and they, crouching also, saw in the dark, outlined against the sky, the German helmet. At that moment he asked in his own dialect, tentatively, "D'ye ken faur the Gordons is?" Immediately they jumped to the conclusion that he was a German. One of them hit out at him with a rifle, and then both fled, but not before the Scot got his fists in upon them, thereafter he also making speedy tracks for his very life, as it seemed to him. In the morning he reported to the doctor at the Ambulance that he thought his arm must have been broken in the night by "twa German deevils." And the Devons also had an interview with the same functionary with a tale of a fierce onslaught made upon them by a terrible enemy, who had cursed them very volubly in a strange tongue. None of the three discovered the truth, though to an outsider it was perfectly clear —another proof that it is the bystander and not the actor himself who sees history in its true light.

There are countless streaks of humour and gleams of laughter even amid the sorrow-clouds of war. How grateful we were when we found occasions like these. For

though we were not downhearted we were often war-weary. And frequently the good cheer of those whom we were there to comfort and strengthen, really strengthened and comforted us.

I remember one Irishman, quite of the type of Micky Free in Lever's novel—a rollicking jolly child of the Emerald Isle, pretty badly battered, but with a sparkle in his eye that you could light a candle at. He was from Dublin. I thought I should speak cheerfully to him, so I said, "Well, now, aren't you lucky to be here, instead of home yonder, getting your head broken in a riot?" "Sure I am, sir," said he. "Lucky to be here, anny way. And lucky is anny man if he'll only get a grave to lie in, let alone a comfortable bed like this. Glory be!—it's myself that's been the lucky one, all the time."

Near him lay another. "Don't spake to him, your honour," said the first man. "Sure, he's a Sinn Feiner." But both of them were of opinion that the loyalty of the rebels might be awakened by contact with German shells. "Bring them out here, sir," said they, "and they won't be Irishmen if they don't get their dander riz with a whiz-

bang flung at them. That would settle their German philandering. Sure, isn't it too bad what we've been enduring to enable the spalpeens to stay at home upsetting the State, flinging Home Rule back maybe a generation with their foolishness, and we as good Irishmen as themselves can be?"

The infinite variety of classes that make up the present army is astonishing. I told once of a Gordon Highlander landing in Havre with a copy of the Hebrew Psalter in the pocket of his khaki apron to read in the trenches. I saw, among our own Gordons, an Aberdeen divinity student, as a private, reading, in the mud, the Greek Testament and the Sixth Book of Homer's *Iliad.* Anything, from that to the *Daily Mail,* represents the reading of our men. This variety is also very noticeable among our officers. We had the lumberman from the vast forests of the West, beside the accountant from San Francisco, the tea-planter from Bengal, the lawyer from the quiet Fife town beside the Forth, the artist, the architect, and the journalist. And it was this mixture that made possible episodes of irresistible comicality.

For instance—to prevent waste of petrol

in "joy riding," a French barrier at one place near us had guards set upon it, under a British officer. One day a young Northern subaltern, entirely fresh to military work, was in charge, and the tale goes that he stopped Sir Douglas Haig's car, asking him to show his permit, and declare his business. When the General did tell who he was, the boy was so taken aback that he is said to have stammered, "So pleased to meet you, sir."

Again, a young officer of the Gordons told me that he was leading a well-known General around some trenches in the dark. They came to a traverse. "We'll go round here," said the General, and the young fellow led the way. But a watchful Gordon leapt up suddenly, with fixed bayonet, and "Who goes there?" The youth replied, "General Blank." "Ay, lad," whimsically replied the Scot, "ye'd better try again. That cock'll no fecht the Cock o' the North."

Another, a verdantly green soldier of the King, almost freshly off the ploughed haughs of home, met an officer of high rank. He was carrying his rifle, but he huddled it under his arm, and awkwardly saluted with the open hand as though he had it not. The

officer said, very kindly, "Here, my man, is the way to salute your superior with your rifle." And he went through the proper regulation field-officers' salute. But Jock, after coolly watching him, as coolly replied, "Ay—ay. Maybe that's your way o't; but I hae my ain way. And I'm no jist sure yet whilk's the richt gait o't."

It would be worth while seeing this man after a few months' training has brought him into "the richt gait o't." In fact the way in which the men have fallen into the habit of discipline is as wonderful as the way they leapt into the line of service for their country's sake, when they were not forced to go. I remember one, who was a type of many. Up in the mouth of a West Highland glen is a little cottage on a croft. And the man there was the last of his race. When others passed out into the wide-world conflict, in the beginning, his mother, who was very old, opposed his going. But she died. And then he drew his door to, locked it, and went to share the battle for liberty, which to-day is shaking the earth. There are far more men of peace than men of quarrel fighting to-day for the soul-compelling things that are of value beyond this

dying world. And these are made of the true victory stuff.

None are less given to talk of what they have done than the very men whose deeds thrill others. They just saw the thing that was needed; they seized the flying moment, and did the deed that makes men's hearts stand still. They come out of it with something akin to the elation of the sportsman who has scored a goal. They saved their side in the game. That was what they aimed at, and they are satisfied.

In my last battalion were two men who, working together, did breathless things without themselves being breathless. They enjoyed them. After one "stunt," our people in the trench observed a man hanging on the enemy's wire. His hand was slowly moving to and fro. They watched carefully, and saw clearly that he was signalling to them. A little group of officers gathered and considered the matter. But it was entirely impossible, they thought, to dream of attempting a rescue before darkness. And they resolved to get together a rescue party in the night and save him. Meanwhile, however, these two worthies slipped away,

crawled over No Man's Land, and brought the poor fellow in. Rebuked for their temerity, their reply was, "We couldna thole the sicht o' a chum oot yonder like that." Another time, after a bitter struggle in a patch of woodland between our line and the enemy's, they came and reported that a man in khaki was to be seen moving from tree stump to tree stump, evidently in distress. "I think he's daft," said one. And in the gloaming, over they went, found him, and brought him in to safety. He had been wounded in the head and side, and left behind. The first day he had kept himself alive by drinking from the water-bottles of the dead; but he had lost his reason and his bearings, and was in despair when our brave fellows got him. And these men were killed, later on, by a slight accident, down behind the lines.

It was difficult to get away from the touch of one's environment. One morning we had a weird reminder. When we opened the door of our hut, there on the threshold lay an unexploded "dud" shell which had fallen in the night. Had it done what had been intended we should have been very suddenly

somewhere among the stars. It made one think a little, of solemn and strange things, and feel more than a little thankful to behold again the light of the sun.

XVI

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

People speak a good deal about the lust for blood and the fever passion of battle. But our boys are not bloodthirsty. A friend of mine, after a scrap, saw an example of that. It nearly cost himself his life, as he had to resist the tendency to laugh, for he had been shot through the lungs. A big Scotsman, in a muddy kilt and with fixed bayonet, had in his charge a German prisoner who was very unwilling to get a move on. And Sandy shouted out to a comrade on ahead, "Hey, Jock! he winna steer. What'll I dae wi' him?" But Jock, busy driving his own man forward, just answered, over his shoulder, "Bring him wi' you." Both of these men had the sweat of conflict not yet dry upon them. But they never for an instant thought, as the German would have thought more readily, of driving the bayonet into that reluctant foe. Of course one does occasionally find the old

grim warrior still, quite content, under hard circumstances, finding indeed the conditions a kind of real relief after the rust of peaceful days. This same friend, going one night along the trenches, almost thigh-deep in mud, came upon a grizzled Irishman, O'Hara, cowering in the rain. "Isn't this a damnable war, O'Hara?" said he. "'Thrue for you, sir," was the unexpected reply; "but, sure, isn't it better than having no war at all?"

A campaign like this brings us into touch with strange bedfellows. A man I know told me: "In one place, during the early, terrible days, we crept into a cellar, and I lay down to try to sleep. But I soon found this to be vain, for I became aware of somebody that kept running to and fro in the dark, making sleep quite impossible. I went out and spoke to the doctor, whom I met. 'Oh,' he replied, 'that's only our lunatic.' It was indeed a poor fellow who had gone mad in the retreat, and they could meanwhile do nothing but carry him along with them."

Perhaps the weirdest of all the strange mixtures whom I met out at the front was a young fellow at a Mechanical Transport camp. His father was a Russian Jew; his

mother was English; his grandfather Dutch; and himself born in London, and brought up in Glasgow. In a world of such widely international disturbance, you almost expected him to go off into effervescence like a Seidlitz.

Amid the sorrow and the weariness of the times out there, it was remarkable how closely laughter followed at the heels of tears. We had great fun over a colonel who was very unpopular, in another division from ours. He did not know, however, the depths of his unpopularity, but, deeming himself the best-beloved among his contemporaries, he was perfectly happy. One day, while he was sitting in front of his dug-out reading an old newspaper, a sniper's bullet passed quite close, and went "pip" into the parados. He paid no attention to it, for, of course, that was only a bit of the day's work. But when another came, he thought it was an attention which carried civility a little too far. So he called a Scotsman to him, and said, "Go out, Jock, and nail that beggar." Jock crawled out, glad of the diversion, stalked the enemy, "winged" him, and was running up to "feenish" him, when the German held up his

arms and cried, "Mercy, Englishman!" But Jock replied, "Mercy? Ye dinna deserve nae mercy. Ye've missed oor colonel twice!" I often wonder if Jock told the colonel what he had said? Or is he still quite happy?

It is told of Jock that on another occasion, when a German held up his hands, after a good deal of dirty work with them, and said, "Mercy, Englishman! I'll go to England with you," Jock replied grimly and coolly, "Maybe, but ye see that's no exactly whaur I'm gaun to send ye."

I was always very much impressed by the Wesleyans whom I often met in painful circumstances. I had never had anything to do with them before, till I came in contact with them wounded and suffering, but always most brave, patient, and truly religious. They bore their distresses without a murmur, and they died without fear. For they knew what they believed in. They had the gift of religion, and the secret of a faith stronger than death. They were true Mystics. I remember one day standing beside one of them who had been very dangerously stricken. His eyes were closed, and he was whispering continuously. I stooped down and listened. He was saying over and over,

"O God, remember me, and help me to get well, for the sake of those I love at home." I was turning to slip away quietly, when he opened his eyes and said, "Whoever you are, don't go, sir. I was only speaking to God." His religion was so intimate a possession that he did not need to apologize for knocking at the door of love with his prayer.

Sometimes we were struck to read what people at home were saying and writing, and especially about the duty of keeping "sunshine faces." It seemed frequently to us like speaking of the weather to a dying man. It is so easy to write or speak like that in a comfortable chair at home, but to the man in a muddy trench or in a hospital ward, or beside a clay hole where what is left of the brave is hastily huddled away while the shells scream overhead, it sounds like very cheap and shallow claptrap. The worst of it is, that these people always seemed to say it at the wrong time, when we were sore at heart and weary. It jarred on us then. What we felt we needed was hearts spread out for the pity of Christ to fall on them like summer rain. We did try to be bright, while our hearts were breaking for the poor boys bravely stemming the cries

that rose to their lips out of their pain or when they died in the stretcher as you carried them, ere they reached the doctor's tent. If prayer ever meant anything for humanity, if Christ ever meant anything like strength for trial, it is now. Or else it is never. And nothing. And despair. Everything else is vain but that.

Nothing could be more pathetic, and often at the same time funnier, than meeting men past military age, who sometimes, for the sake of their boys serving, had slipped into the army, mentally folding down a corner of their birth certificate over the date, salving their consciences as did one who said to me, "I told them I was thirty-four—but I didn't say on what birthday." I remember one old Scot who could scarcely move, telling me, "I doot I'll hae to get awa' hame. Thae rheumatics is nae guid in the trenches, and they're girnin' at me again." Of course he had "a laddie lyin' up yonder," and a nephew, and a "guid-sister's half-brither," and so on, like the rest. And if it were not for these pains he would be as good as ever he was! Some time later I met him in the rain, and asked how he felt now. "Oh," said he, "I'm jist fine the day. I saw my

youngest laddie gaun up, and I'd a word or twa wi' him. I'll be writin' his mither the nicht aboot it. He was lookin' grand."

I called on one old woman at home, and she told me that her husband had only the previous day, which was his birthday, gone off to France. "Eh," said she, with unction, "he's a guid man, my man. I often think I was a lucky woman to have sic a man. D'ye ken—he never told a lie." "And yesterday was his birthday?" I inquired. "And how old was he?" "He was fifty-eight," was her answer. But when I asked how this modern rival of George Washington had got into the army, she innocently replied, "Ye see, he said he was thirty-twa."

How these elderly men endured, for any length of time at all, the discomforts of the front was beyond understanding. They were of course frequently caught when youth was more able to skip out of the way of death. The little shell-swept graveyards at the front doubtless got many of them very soon.

I spoke some time since of some of the forgotten and overlooked departments of our army. There are plenty such, of course, but one cannot help recalling amongst these

the Battalion Runners, who carry messages over No Man's Land, or anywhere, from post to post, when air and earth are filled with hissing death, and who also act as guides up to the trenches. They are absolutely fearless. Their type varies, from the gaunt silent figure that stalks before you, like an Indian, through the dark, to the garrulous fellow who talks all the time over his shoulder as he goes. One of the latter was leading up our men, and the colonel said to him, "I hear that these dug-outs are wretched water-logged holes." "'Deed, they are that," replied the guide. And then gently, as if on a tender after-thought, "D'ye ken, sir, I'm often vexed for you, for I'm perfectly convinced that you're accustomed to something better than yon at home."

Another is the military policeman who controls and guides the traffic at the cross roads, and where there is constant danger of shells falling, in such places as the Square at Ypres. There, amongst evidences of steady peril, stands this quiet man with the red band on his arm, and he steps forward to warn you that it is not safe to be there! I cannot forget one road when we were moving up to the front. The stream of life flow-

ing on towards the fighting area was like the Strand in London at its busiest. The policeman with uplifted hand controlling the traffic was as powerful there as at home. In a moment, at the signal, limbers, guns, motor lorries, ambulances, mounted men and marching infantry stood motionless, for miles back till permitted to go on again.

The directions we got one day from an Irish policeman were unforgettable. He said, "It's quite easy to find, your honour. You see—when you go into Albert you don't go into it at all. But you turn to the right, keeping well to the left, all the way." We thanked him heartily, and trusted to Providence as we are apt to do where there is nothing else that can be done. And following our directions in a general way, we reached our place in safety.

Again, you will find right up behind the front the roadman busy—coolly filling up holes that shells have made, and behaving just as though he were working on a stretch of the Trossachs, or patching up the rut-worn tracks that the rain has damaged along by Kyle.

It is in the air branch of the service that chivalry remains most markedly. Of course

in our navy you still get it, when you find our men risking their lives and their ships to save drowning enemies. But in the air service there is a mysterious spirit of generosity between foes that is almost as striking as the superlative courage of the combatants.

I saw not long since a very keen battle, far up in the blue. Two German aeroplanes were being pursued by ours. I never hoped to see such skill in flying. They looped the loop, they dived, they rallied—they seemed to outdo the swallows in their art. Then one, winged, fell a great height, recovering quite near the earth; and, crawling off, limpingly managed to escape. Somehow we felt relieved, although he was a foe. The other, however, was driven down, like a blind thing. Every avenue of escape he tried was closed, as if by the wings of eagles, by our airmen. But we were quite sorry when we heard that when he reached the earth he was dead, shot through the heart in the last stage of his flight.

These men are amongst the most wonderful we have. I saw two who had been six miles beyond the German lines. At about ten thousand feet in the air they had been

attacked by enemy aeroplanes, and their machine set on fire. Yet they came back, burned, but undaunted, and landed within our lines, as though they had been at a picnic.

And a young friend of mine, shot through the foot, probably lamed for life, told me how, at a great height, he had been attacked. He swooned from his hurt, and fell, but recovered consciousness in time to get his machine again in hand, and landed safely two hundred yards across our lines.

There can be no braver hearts than those. Many a time we looked up at them, sailing overhead, and wondered; and the roughest Tommy sends something like a prayer with them as they go.

I have said little about the Germans in all this. But the folks at home must never for a moment forget what this fight means to the enemy, as it does to ourselves. It is a fight to the finish for life or death. Our prisoners are not, as the papers love to make out, a ragged, wretched set of degenerates. They are for the most part, as I have seen them, burly, well-fed, and well-clothed soldierly men.

I spoke to one officer after the Push be-

gan last year. He was lying badly wounded on a stretcher, and he used such faultless English that I asked him at what school in England he had been. He said, "I never was in England in my life. I learned all my English in Shanghai where I was in business." I asked him when he thought the war would finish, and he replied, "When the last man is killed on either side." I also asked him what he thought of his people's Zeppelin raids and submarine outrages on the *Lusitania* and kindred ships. And he said, "We who have been out of Germany all our lives wonder why the people in authority at home persist in these world-rousing tactics, foolish and cruel, and futile beyond reason. We want to fight soldiers like ourselves, and not to slay innocent women and children." He expressed surprise at the number of men he had seen behind our lines, as he was carried through, and I said, "Don't be surprised. That is nothing. Go a hundred, ay, thousands of miles behind—and you will find men all the world over, with their faces and their hearts set for victory or death towards this battle-line, against this outrage you have let loose upon the civilization and liberty of to-day." There

are no greater capital errors than to despise your enemy or to over-estimate your ally, as we have learned, only too bitterly. Do not let us forget it, or the victory the world needs will slip from our grasp.

XVII

THE PRINCE

It was after dinner, and we were all chatting, for we had not seen the doctor for an age. Suddenly somebody came in and said, "The Prince is dead."

We sprang up and looked at one another.

"Surely," cried the doctor, "they haven't allowed him to the firing line!"

But another asked, "What Prince?"

And the bearer of evil tidings said, "Allan Mairi Roy."

And in a flash I saw him—"the Prince," as we always called him, straight and beautiful—a hero in look and figure. And behind him I saw the croftland of which he was the pride—the green plots on the plateau high above the sea, and the roofs of the houses shining in the sun-burst after the rain—the croftland that has not to-day a child's laughter in it, where there is no mother with a babe at her breast, where there is not now a young man or a young

woman to carry on the line of those that have grown old in the fields where they have toiled.

Can it really be so long since they were all so handsome and so young, those fine Macraes and Mackenzies—and the girls that were so beautiful, with the blush which the kiss of the wind, like a lover's, had planted on their cheek? Is it really long years since the question used to be, when one returned tanned from the East, and looked in the morning across the river to the crofts, "Who is the beauty now? Who holds the palm to-day?" And the answer was, "Oh! Mairi Roy. Dhia—there's none comes near her. She's the queen!"

They were not like others, up there above the sea. Their portion was not hard and strained endeavour. Their land was not like some lands—"girnin' a' winter, greetin' a' summer." Their houses were not broken-down, crumbling things of clay, with draggled thatch, scarce a shelter from the western rain. There was no sodden uncleanness about the doors. And the men, graceful, stepping like stags, came into the church like gentlemen, carrying with them the soft fragrant aroma of the peat. In fact, they were

a prosperous community apart—the plateau and the glen behind divided up amongst them into a "club tenancy," an ideal mode of securing to the country a brave peasantry. But they were not given to marrying. And when Mairi Roy married Calum Ban it was a great event in the homes above the sea. And who shall say what it meant when her little boy was born? Then, as he grew up, like a bit of sunshine, playing amongst the cottages there, the hearts that had no children of their own to love, worshipped him with affectionate pride, and he became the prince of the crofts above the sea. And he was worthy of the title, for he was all a prince should be. But now they all are old, and Mairi, in her widowhood, is left alone; and the sunshine will be dark for her; and she will heed neither the wind nor the rain; for her prince is lying dead—dead in the beauty of his young manhood, in the wonder of his promise, in the fulness of his strength, where the brave fell in a brave man's fight above the Dardanelles.

And there is irony in his death. For, when he was but a youth, off he went to a great university in the south to learn to be a healer of men. What a doctor he would

have made! How proud people would have been to see the fine figure coming to their door! To look at him was to feel well. But Mairi could not bear the thought of him being away from her. The world felt empty without him. Her tears and prayers broke right across his dream. So she brought him back to be beside her in the fields above the sea. And now he is in the darkness of the grave where the winding Dardanelles shine in the Eastern sun. Yet little did she know. She brought him back to have his share in the splendour of sacrifice for the healing of the nations.

It is another tragedy of the croftlands, where so many a promise, so many a beautiful thing of poesy has gone out like a candle quenched in the wind. For this boy could not spend his life away from usefulness. And when the Empire began to think of the people in the islands and the glens, they gave "the Prince" a position in which he might organize the means that were being used to give the remnant of the old race a foothold in the land their fathers had fought for. It was a position with some honour attached to it. There was money in it for his labour. He would have had a life of credit

and of usefulness, and Mairi's old age would have been spent in ease.

But the cry went through the West, when the shadow of war, like a heavy mist, crept northwards over the hills. And when the men of the West went in their thousands, leaving the corn to be reaped by the old, who were weary, his heart too felt the call, and again he answered the voice of duty, and followed the sound of the marching feet that were seeking, out of the quiet places, the crash of the battlefield, for the liberty of the world and the truth of God.

And, again, there was yet another irony in it all. For the little mountain battery seemed so insignificant that men, sometimes, at the beginning of the Great War, laughed at the thought of the village boys with their light guns ever being of use. "Oh," said they, "they'll be decorations in Bedford or in Rothesay. What would they be doing with mountain guns in Flanders or in France?"

Little did they think, as they spoke, of the craggy forts by the terrible Dardanelles, or of the deeds, incredible in difficulty, unparalleled in heroism, that would be called

for from the boys of the village by the sea. What seemed impossible, they had their manly share in; and in the great things that matter they bore their manly part.

But in the croftland on the plateau this is the crowning tragedy. The only young life that was there has been extinguished; and when the old have passed away, and been carried to the graveyard where the manse burn sings beside their sleeping dust in the daylight and the dark, till the trumpet call of God shall tear apart the stillness of the glen on Judgment Morn, there is none other of their line to face the sunshine and the rain, the seed-time and the harvest; for, since "the Prince" is dead, in battle by the Dardanelles, the hope of youth has passed away from the fields above the sea.

Forget not him and his like, oh, ye for whom they fall! And, when the day of peace returns, scatter not any more into far lands "a brave peasantry, their country's pride," lest, once again, in the hour of darkness and of pain, the cry go through the glens, and only stir the grasses of the graveyard, and the weeds among the ruins where once the true hearts had their homes.

Far away in the mountains, far where the fathers lie,
Who shall blame us, if ever our thoughts must roam,
Hearing in towns the song of the waves that wash on the shores of Skye,
Far away, where the West is waiting her children turning home?

XVIII

SONS OF THE MANSE

I WELL remember the bright-faced boys, keen-eyed and happy-hearted. And I recall the homes they came from, some in places remote, far from the din and struggle of the industrial world, others in the heart of towns, or on the outskirts of villages. Who does not know the typical Scottish manse, tall and grey among the stately trees, under whose immemorial shadows generations of ministers have passed? The snowdrops peeped in the spring-time from the sward; the children's laughter echoed through the rambling passages, and in the garden. And at night, when the house was still, the villagers passed quietly, lest they should disturb the brooding of him whose shadow crossed the blind, thinking of the needs of the parish, the faith he had to strengthen, the sorrows he had to comfort, and the anxieties he had to dispel. Or it might be by the verge of some western loch, or on some

island in the Hebrides, where every room was filled, as by a haunting presence, with the sob and the sigh of that vast Melancholy whose salt tide ebbs and flows eternally about the shores of all the world.

The manse taught hospitality. Its door opened inward always; and never a grief nor a necessity was turned away unsolaced or unhelped. Was there any wonder that the interest in the children of the manse was most frequently the paramount interest of the parish? There was not an old woman or an old man in the village but felt entitled, personally, to wonder what the boys were doing, what their future was to be, or what country they were wandering in.

I remember the excitement of the village when a child was born to the minister. The bell rang as joyful an appeal as its solemn tones could muster. The Boys' Brigade paraded, and, with their band of four or five flute-players, marched through all the streets and lanes, playing the only tune they knew, which very suitably was *There's a Friend for little Children!*

The sons of the manse grew up, and they went away to big cities to be prepared for universities and for life. There used to be

so many of them—in some parishes the manse bairns, with the children of the beadle, sometimes making up almost the whole roll of the Sunday School. But in modern times so many of them were only sons.

It was natural, when the cry of war broke across the world, when the appeal of liberty threatened and honour overthrown stirred every brave heart to the utmost of its manhood, that the boys of the manse should step forward among the foremost for the defence of what they had learned to love, ready for sacrifice for home and God. The children of no other class have eclipsed these for loyalty. Over ninety per cent. of the sons of the Scottish manses have gone freely to the colours, and, in their dying, shot by the sniper, or stumbling into death in the charge through shrapnel, hissing bullet, suffocating gas, and blinding smoke, they have written in their blood a sacred record of the value of example and the deathless wonder of love and humanity. Alas! with them has passed into the silence of the grave, in France, Flanders, Gallipoli, and elsewhere, so much of the intellect, the scholarship, the tender helpfulness of to-

morrow and its activities, that the world is undoubtedly the poorer for the passing of the ministers' sons to death. That this is so is proved by even a glimpse into the record of their achievements in the past. You have only to dip into *Who's Who* to see how many, in the spheres of war and peace, have gone through the manse gate into the climbing ways of honour in the service of humanity.

And so I recall some of them. Their fathers and mothers I knew—loved them as friends, and thought of them as neighbours, though it meant sometimes long miles between their manse and ours. I remember the happy children—the quiet boys with studious eyes, gentle and shrinking. It is strange to think of them falling in the din of battle and the strenuous warfare of struggling men. You could not believe that some of them would ever be found in such environment. Others, of course, were soldiers born—with the hot indignation over wrong, or shame, oppression, cruelty, or crime, which is the secret of a fearless heart.

One, when he came back from the front, out of the muddy trenches, where the boys were dying round him, spent the time of his

brief leisure in the little bosky glen where he had played as a child. The burn that tinkled over the stones, and gurgled underneath the grasses, or lay in quiet pools wherein the brown trout were dreaming, brought again his peaceful childhood round about his heart, and he came back every evening solemnized as though a spirit had been speaking to him. "I will carry that music," he said, "back to the trenches when I go. Home is worth fighting for, and the places that one loves." He went with the remembrance back to the Land of War, and the sniper caught him. There is a cross on his grave in Flanders, and a deep scar in the hearts of those who never can forget him—who will remember his prattle and his promise, seeing him always as the little child with the sunshine of hope above him, when he played in the tiny glen at home.

From among the Southern hills, lonely as any Highland territory, came another. He won note and distinction as a scholar, and was set by his country in a place of honour on the outposts of empire. But he came back at duty's call; and, in the Land of War, Death put a crown of conquest on his golden curls. For those that loved him,

the glens seem now all clothed with a deeper stillness than ever they had known.

And there was one whose blood was stirred by the appeal; and he came back twelve thousand miles to fight or die for the heritage of his fathers. And he too sleeps where the brave are sleeping.

Another—how the Gordon blood moved in him! And when he got the Gordon tartan on him, how keen he was! And he was never to see his twenty years. And though the sorrow of the manse was crowned with a pathetic pride, because the boy had been so brave, yet the hearts there grew, of a sudden, very old; and mirth went out from them for ever.

And away in the island where the serried peaks rise majestically starwards, looking out across the distant waters to the mystery beyond, the quiet folks are wondering why the dreams of the returning find no answer save the saddest, in the dawn. For more manses than one have heard the heart-stunning tidings that their only boy has run hastily up the pathway to the sun, and told Him who also, still, has wound-marks for others on His hands and feet and side, why so soon their souls have sought His pres-

ence, when the world has yet need for young enthusiasms of the brave. East, west, north, south, the winds are whispering of the unreturning. And the hearts of quiet worshippers are hushed as with the presence of the Divine, while they behold the early snows of age marking the locks of him whose heart so recently was young. And the sorrows of the village and the parish feel a rebuke of selfishness pass through them while they are comforted by him in whose deep breast abides for evermore the sorrow for the only son.

But the list seems endless, and as you sit brooding by the fire, face after shadowy face looks into your heart, stirring regretful remembrance.

XIX

THE SPIRITUAL FUTURE

This is a war of vision, and it has inevitably widened the outlook of all men, but especially the outlook of those churchmen and men of theology who have been brought into living contact with it. Out in the land of war, dogma has become like the burdensome kit which a soldier flings away from him as he enters the stern conflict where death jostles life, in closest contest for the victory. You have neither time nor room for the trimmings of the faith. You are right down, there, on the prime elements. You have to do with neither praying carpet, candles, nor vestments, but with the stark souls of men, seeing, often, through cracks in the flimsy partitions that have been run up between time and eternity, the heart of a man and God.

If you speak to men out there, you know you are speaking to the souls that ere a few hours pass will have taken the final step

across the Great Divide; and, even if they weather the cataclysmic blast that will soon beat upon them, they will come back as those who have looked into the well at the world's end, and learned something of the mystery of the Beyond. Life, in that moment of your speaking, takes on a meaning deeper than you or they have dreamed heretofore. You must speak as to those whose faces you may never see again till you see the face of God.

What, then, do you speak of in such an hour of stress? You speak of the very things that make for unity, the absolute fundamentals that in time of trial give steadiness and courage to the soul. These are: the love of God, in Jesus Christ, who stood up for those who could not stand up for themselves, and died to conquer sin and to give the weak a chance—the imperative power of His example; the splendour of sacrifice for others, and for the sake of liberty, honour, and purity; the all-conquering influence of the clean, straight life, and the fact that God does not forget the soul that has gone through its Calvary upon the Cross of Duty. And, then, the deathlessness of that spirit which animates the clay, and that

hope of a meeting, after the parting here, which lights the face of the dying as with a sunburst from the Land of Dawn.

I have seen that light, and it extinguishes all the little candles of sectarian creeds. Christ comes, at such a time, out of the far perspective through which we see Him at home, in our narrow environments, in times of peace and ease, wherein we find such leisure to create and formulate so many things which divide. These all go off, like will-o'-the-wisps in the sunrise, when Christ comes on to His right, which is the full possession of the soul of a man.

Things that are worlds apart come strangely together in a time like this. For example, in Havre, in the cemetery, there is a grave marked by a simple symbol of memorial love, which more than anything shews how a great and deep experience like this crisis binds together remote discordant elements. It marks the resting-place of a North African Moslem, and tender hands that laid him to sleep there placed over his dust the cross, emblem of the faith of those for whom he fell, and on the cross they engraved the crescent and the star, the emblem of his own faith which had upheld him in his

sacrifice! I wonder if there is another memento like that anywhere else in the world! The thought of home and the love of our dear ones moulded and coloured our religion out there. The fundamentals are surely rooted in these.

We always thought of the brave womanhood at home, of the sufferings of love that had said good-bye for ever—of the little babes that were being born who would never see their fathers' faces.

If once you heard those marching feet, if once you saw the suffering borne without complaint, the agony mastered by manhood —if once you heard in our camps *The Lord's my Shepherd,* or *Lead, Kindly Light,* sung by those who might never sing them again— if once you saw those men bowed down in prayer for you and those they loved at home, and heard the "Amen" wrung out of earnest hearts, you would wonder what you have done that these should die for you; and you would understand as in the flash of a new and fresh revelation the secret of the spell of sacrifice, and the meaning of the wounds of Christ, in a way beyond the power of human word's expression.

This war has a real touch of the hand of

God in it. God is smiting the drowsy luxurious world upon its side, stirring it out of ease and selfishness to recognition of duty and right ere He leads it out under the vast quiet of the stars. He is asking a great price from us as the cost of our awakening—sacrifice of life, sacrifice of money, the loss of many dear to us. It has cost much already, but it will cost more. And if the world does not wake to the necessity this great campaign will cost everything. It has taken us all our time to hold the enemy where they are. Think what it will cost us to drive them out of France, to drive them out of Belgium, to humble them until they learn in a stern and real humiliation the secret of the true greatness of a nation. It is sad to say good-bye, but, considering the issues that are involved, I say to those who have lost their loved and dear, "Clothe yourselves in a proud thankfulness rather than sorrow, ye fathers and mothers, for the brave boys that ye begot and bore, who wore their wounds like roses as they went home to God. Be proud that your flesh and blood were not degenerate in the day of sacrifice for others. There is the glory that is around the Crown of Thorns about your sorrow."

I could not help sometimes remembering the Swiss patriot who, with his band of peasants, armed with clubs, one day came up against a host of steel-clad Austrians, with their long and terrible spears. He could find no way of penetrating their phalanx, and hope was dying in their hearts, and liberty with it. But he turned round to his peasants and said, "Wait, I will make way for liberty." And stretching out his arms, as Christ stretched out His arms upon the Cross, he clutched in one sweep all the spears he could gather, and thrust them into his body, as he leaned down to the earth, weighing them down as he fell. And as he stumbled unto death he shouted, "Make way for liberty." Through the door his body made the peasants leaped to victory or death. That is what our boys are doing out yonder. In the splendour of their sacrifice for us we learn more and more the wonder and the sacrifice of Christ Himself for you and me.

Out yonder I have seen a crowded hut, or a tent filled to overflowing, with no thought of Church or creed or ritual, but swayed, as the wheat is swayed by the breath of the ripening autumn, by the one great thought of Him who died. I have seen the Catholic,

with his crucifix in his hands, beside the Anglican, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, and the man of no Church, rapt in the thought of the Comrade of the Way of Sacrifice, and of His wounding for the souls of men. Chaplains of all the Churches worked together, came into conference together, and became absorbed in the one purpose of winning men's hearts for God, their own hearts having been surrendered to the Highest, their prejudices burned to ashes in the fire of such great service.

It seemed to me as though at home our faith had been silting down upon its foundations till the lintels were getting too low, and the roofs contracted.

We have come through an earthquake heave, and have awakened to the fact that there is, behind ecclesiastical disputings, the still small voice all the while. War, the short stride between life and death, the close breathing of the Eternal, put ecclesiastical controversies and declarations aside. You only see a brother dedicate to death, for you; you give the symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of Him who died to bring the immortal that is chained to humanity into tune with the Infinite; and I tell you, you

can almost hear God speak in the tensity of such a moment's quivering reality.

The men are ready for Christ. We hear, sometimes, warnings against taking a statement like that in its bald, plain significance. We are told that disbanded armies have not been spiritual forces, and that armies, at any time, have not been hosts of saints. We are told that many of the men have been unchanged by the terrible appeal of war. That is quite true. But this also is truth. There never was an army like that which is fighting for us to-day; and there never was an ideal or a cause like that which has inspired its efforts and its sacrifice. The whole army beats with the pulse of the noblest of our flesh and blood. It is not the gathering of a mass of professional fighters; it is the assembling of true men dedicated to win or die for the sake of the honour of God, the liberty of the world, and the growth of the soul of goodness. These things have none of the accidental in them. They are not of one school or another of theological thought —of one form or another of ecclesiastical life. They have within them the fundamentals. And that fact, combined with the fact of the kind of men who are fighting and

dying for them, is what makes for such a thing as unity of outlook Godwards in the Land of War.

What then? If we do not prepare ourselves at home for the home-coming of such an impulse and conviction, we shall be guilty of a great apostasy—a denial of the Holy Spirit. We must sternly shut our eyes to infallible and exclusive claims that have too long been allowed to masquerade in ecclesiastical guise, and get closer to the big spiritual facts, which are not bound up in forms or in ascending hierarchies, but which are lamps for life's dark pathways, stepping-stones in life's deep streams, and vessels full of comfort and refreshing for pilgrims on the way through the crowded streets or over the narrow desert between Now and the Beyond.

To-day is the opportunity coming to the Church, to be no longer the mere repository of gramophone records of past opinions, but rather to be the vehicle and instrument of God's living thought—an angel by the highway, to lead the weary to the well of life. There is the principle of healing and of unity in that. My work among our brave men oversea has convinced me so.

XX

AFTER THE WAR—WHAT?

It may be said that it is too soon yet to speak of such a subject; that the War—which is quite possible, in consequence of recent unforeseen events among the Allies—may last another two years; and that, even after that, it may take two years more before the vast military machinery is unlocked and the army liberated from its vigil. Very well; let it be so. The day is past, long since, when people spoke of the War as going to be a three months' push to Berlin. It was foolish talk; but people liked it, and looked on those who said that it was folly, as being only the greater fools, if not, indeed, touched with treason. Time's bitterest revenge is, of course, after all, the shifting of the fool's cap on to the heads of those who have a right to it, and did not know their privilege. The folly still persists in some places; but, if we would be wise, the only conclusion that is safe is that

the War will end when it has finished its purpose. And that finish is not near. For the task is the greatest the world of righteousness has ever faced. The foe is the most stubborn, the best prepared, that ever has taken the field, and with resources of all evil so plentiful, that the work of conquest is colossal. Yet it must be done, and done to the last lap; otherwise it will only mean the facing of it again and again, later on. The pain, the horror, the sorrow, the loss, the ruin to civilization and the world of Nature and of man, are such, and so vast, that, if it must be, let it be one great tragedy rather than a serial, a thing of successive acts. When the curtain falls, it must fall upon it for ever. We must face it so.

But, if it be as we think, we must also remember that it will take as long as the War lasts, however long that be, to get ready at home for the end of it.

Whatever is to be done after the War must be done in the spirit that made us enter upon it. And that was the spirit of sacrifice, the free sacrifice of free men for the sake of freedom and light. Freedom and light must be secured after the War, or it has been futile sacrifice.

President Wilson said the other day that the purpose of the War was to crush the German power, because that was a thing "without conscience or honour, or capacity for covenanted peace,"—"a menace of combined intrigue and force." It is, indeed, a thing of hideous perversity, an anomaly and anachronism, which has broken out of the darkest Tophet of the Middle Ages into the peace, prosperity, liberty, and hope of modern civilization, religion, and settled life of nations. There can be no compromise with that. *The devil keeps no treaties, though he makes many.* Even those who love peace most of all cannot endure the continuance or the triumph of such a horror, without identifying themselves with falseness, cruelty, and wrong.

And yet to-day, every heart that loves, longs for peace; but never on the basis of things before the War. The graves across the world forbid that. The shades of the brave would forbid the banns between Righteousness and Wrong.

Who would not have peace and prosperity rather than war's devastation and distracting anxieties, with the shadow of death over almost every home? We fight not merely

at command of any earthly king, but of the King of kings, as one great democracy, not for war's brutalities, but for the sweetness of the life of peace, shocked to its foundation by the Prussian terror.

That we shall come out of it victors for Honour's sake, because we must, unless the world perish, justifies our thought of what will have to be, after the War is over. We believe in the righteousness of God, who never yet left Honour and Liberty to perish. We may emerge from it stripped bare, a victor only in our nakedness, a world impoverished, shorn of the splendour of our youth, and the hope of our manhood, yet with honour still the precious jewel of our soul intact. We plough to the end of the furrow, though we sweat tears of blood in our ploughing. There is no other way to raise the harvest of peace and victory. There is no looking back. This is our Calvary, and we hope for resurrection victory, when we have finished our vigil there.

Now, what is to be after the War, must be faced with the same high purpose, the same wide and steady view, the same vastness of achievement, in earnestness, diligence, and the spirit of sacrifice.

Men speak of *the failure of Civilization.* Yet it is not the failure, but the murder, of Civilization that we are witnessing. Men speak of the *failure of the Church*; but it is the crucifixion of Christ that we are seeing. And so, whatever is attempted after the War must keep in view the grand, eternal, basic facts of a civilization still founded on righteousness, indestructible, though trampled in mire and blood; and a Christ whose throne is unshaken, though He Himself has been foully stricken in Christendom.

And again, men are speaking to-day too much from a point of view external and superior to the crowd whose streets they look down into, and to the soldiers of whom they know from books and vague impressions, without remembering that the crowd also have a point of view of keen criticism of existing institutions, and that the soldier has a mind and heart which will not always be under control of the drill sergeant; and that both will not only think and speak after the War, but may act also. It is a thinker that will return from the hard school of the trenches, not a child obedient to be fed with spoon-meat of conventional reform. It is,

in fact, the nation that will come back—or rather what is left of it, sadly and sorely raked and riddled clear of very much of all that has been best within it; but thinking all the more on that account. Every type is there; and one size and shape and dosage of remedy and help and reform will not suit all.

Yet, in a general way, one may forecast somewhat.

In the offset, it is plain that life in the past has been too much shut off into air-tight compartments. The fireside life, the life of industry in all phases, the political sphere, the field of religion, have all had between them a deep gulf, though perhaps not so wide as it has seemed. The ethical ideal of one has not been the ethical ideal of the others. A man who would not dream of a questionable act or thought in his domestic circle has often been involved, without a blush, in shady affairs of trade and professional business. The politician has not hesitated, over and over again, to stoop to a dodge for votes or popular applause, to subterfuge or polished falsehood for his party's sake, and still counted himself in among men of honourable life. Yet all, in the home and in the Church, have held by

the highest codes of conduct that Religion has revealed to men. We have, in fact, for long, been forgetting that all life is one; that life is an organic whole, that the code of honour is the same in all its departments; that a man cannot be a Christian for a part of Sunday and leagues away from its plain elements through the week, without some damage to the moral fibre of his soul.

It may be true that "business is business." It may be true that the sanction of a great politician is behind the statement that, while Christianity is our noblest institution, "it must not be allowed to interfere with the sanctities of private life." But the man who runs the business, and the man who conducts private life, so-called, is the same man who would be astonished if told that he stands up for measurement in all his activities against the one law of the honour of God. Not only is *all life* one, but *all morality* is one.

So, after the War, that must be the very first guiding and compelling purport of social activity. *Human life must be honest all through, and not in streaks.*

As for religion, we know how it is in fact to-day; how, bit after bit, its sphere

has been invaded by so-called reformers, till parental control has been slackened, and the streets are crowded with irresponsibilities of youth, and youthful crime is all too common. And then, those who loosened the Church's hold on the guidance of the nation's life cry out, "What have the Churches been doing?" You take away the sentries, and then complain when the camp is invaded!

There are many suggestions as to how the Church should be improved after the War. "Fewer sermons; Shorter sermons; No sermons at all." What then? A procession of imitation priests, and something gabbled out of a book? What a paradise for blockheads the Church would become, when it would be a disadvantage, greater even than it is to-day sometimes, for the pulpit to have brains in it! The Church is the Speaker OF, and FOR, God, as well as the Speaker TO God,—the Teacher of spiritual ethics, as well as the Guide in worship. And, in it, he who has no message to strengthen his people will have no thought to uplift them. And, again, you read that, after all, a preacher should cheer his congregation; should say nothing about sin or sorrow,

But can a man shut his eye to evil, and close his mouth against it, and be a pacifist propagandist for a compromise with the devil, and yet be a man of God? The pulpit, with a living, fearless message, saved the world before our day. It spoke, with no uncertain voice, even to kings, instead of bowing to their vices, as well as to the commonest subject in the realm. Ragged men, hunted on the moors, did more to bring men to God and to a sense of their souls by the preaching of His truth than half the Assemblies and Committees of to-day.

What the Church needs after the War is *more of St. Francis than of Ignatius or Dominic,* more of the minister and friend than the ritualistic priest,—in fact, a Christ liberated from bookish form and conventional ceremony. There is no difficulty in finding an awakening theme for His sake. The lesson of the wounds: of Calvary in France and Flanders and elsewhere; surrender; sacrifice; fidelity; and hope: these are still in the old Book, overwritten as with a new pen of flame to-day.

It is true that there are questions of *better housing,* and matters for the Sanitary Inspector; but the first question for the

Church is the question of *better homes.* Are the homes of our land getting ready for the returning of the men who have looked life and death in the face, and have learned the big deep abysmal things that are behind the facts of the passing day? Are the homes getting ready? Will some of the brave men be goaded to violence and murder by the discovery of drunken and immoral wives, who have starved their children, and drunk the allowance that was the father and husband's blood-money—unless something be done to stop it now?

The men, out in the mud and discomfort of war, idealize their homes, even the poorest of them. They forget the faults that sometimes saddened them there. They forget their own faults. They think tenderly of home and wife and children. If they themselves have been careless, what a link to bind them to a better life is in this getting hearts and firesides clean for their returning! See that whatever darkens the flame on the hearthstone is removed, that the soldier's home may get a chance.

AFTER THE WAR should mean, if we be true, some things, at any rate, worth praying for and beginning at:

Christ, not Presbyterian, nor popish, nor Episcopalian, nor Baptist, but the Son of God the Universal Father, suffering for all: the State, as a real part of the purpose of God, under whom, from the king to the beggar, all shall have a broad way of clean opportunity in wide brotherhood, freely open before him: humbug and dishonesty in Church and State, in politics and trade, quashed, and swept out, in the cleaning of the national life: Character and not Cash, Personality and not the accident of birth, or the skill of backstair creeping, and the art of corruption and wire-pulling, as the secret of successful manhood, and a place in the world's clean endeavour; a free chance for free men, who have bought freedom with their blood, to live a free clean life, in healthy homes, and in sobriety: and, God above, beneath, within, and around all.

This is not a new creed, but much of it has been forgotten. Like the writing on a palimpsest, it is being revived by the blood that is being shed, on the page of hope that is before the heart of the soldier, out, to-day, in the mire and sorrow of the world's pain.

That is my message from the Land of

War. It is what we have been praying for, long time, yonder.

Otherwise the best blood of our Empire has been shed in vain. And the battle may have to begin once more—it may be in our own land next time. Which God forbid!

THE BOYS

Ah, 'tis lonesome in the homestead
  While the lads are far away;
And the hearts they've left behind them
  Can but quietly wait and pray,
Keeping still the old lamp burning,
  And the latch loose on the door,
For the welcome ones returning
  When the weary war is o'er.

And the lads themselves are thinking
  Of the faces ever dear;
And Remembrance, in the darkness,
  Brings the loved ones very near;
And the dismal hour of vigil
  Loses more than half its pain,
For the thought, like prayer, within it,
  Of the coming home again.

There are many softly sleeping,
  Who shall never more awake
Till God's sudden trumpet sounding
  Shall upon their slumber break;
But they'll leap to that revally,
  Ever faithful, brave, and true,
And we'll see them stepping proudly
  In God's final great review.

So in stillness of the evening,
  Or when stirs the call of day,
To our God in highest heaven
  May our spirits ever pray,—

That He'll bring our boys back to us,
When the time of pain is o'er,
Or lead us, where they shall wait us,
Clothed in victory, evermore.

L. McL. W.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: JUN 2001
PreservationTechnologies
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